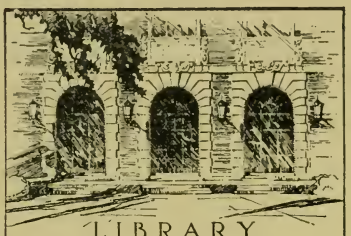

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OR,

THE DUNCE OF THE FAMILY.

CHARLIE THORNHILL;

OR,

THE DUNCE OF THE FAMILY.

A Novel.

BY

CHARLES CLARKE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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TO

THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL SPENCER,

GROOM OF THE STOLE TO H. R. H. THE PRINCE OF WALES,

&c. &c. &c.,

THIS FIRST EFFORT IN THE FIELDS OF FICTION

Is Dedicated,

WITH THE HIGHEST REGARD,

AND WITH THE MOST SINCERE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HIS LORDSHIP'S

KIND PERMISSION, BY

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	THE ROBBERS	1
II.	THE BATTLE	22
III.	THE CONSULTATION	34
IV.	"MY FRIEND GEOFFREY"	49
V.	AN ENGLISH GENTLEMAN'S CASTLE	60
VI.	"AND ITS INMATES"	76
VII.	TO THE COURSE	88
VIII.	THE RACE	97
IX.	THE CHALLENGE	109
X.	HOMEWARD	120
XI.	TIME FOR REFLECTION	133
XII.	CHARLIE TAKES THE WATER LIKE A DOG	144
XIII.	OUR HOLIDAY	160
XIV.	THE STEEPLE-CHASE	172

CHAP.		PAGE
XV.	A DINNER AND ITS AGRÉMENS	188
XVI.	UNCLE HENRY	197
XVII.	GRILLED BONES	215
XVIII.	TWO BREAKFASTS	241
XIX.	AN EARLY STAGE OF THE UNIVERSAL MALADY	259
XX.	IN QUEST OF A DOG	281

CHARLIE THORNHILL.

CHAPTER I.

"Hearken to me, gentlemen,
Come and you shall heare,
I'll tell you of two of the boldest brethren,
That ever borne y-were."—*Ballad Poetry.*

It was a beautiful evening about the middle of spring; and as the sun was approaching gradually the horizon, a small pleasure-boat containing two persons pulled into a creek on the river Lee, a mile or two from Cork. Half a dozen rude steps led through a rustic gate to a very small but neatly kept lawn. The neatness of the place was remarkable, as neither the size of the house nor the garden justified such anticipations. It seemed not so much an evidence of means as of a refinement superior to that of those around, whose cottages, with greater extent, had generally an unkept and neglected look, and bespoke

as much an indifference to comfort as an incapability of acquiring it. The cottage itself was utterly without pretension. It consisted apparently of about four small rooms exclusive of servants' offices: a verandah, looking to the east and south, gave an ornamental appearance to the building; and a few creepers, already putting forth their earliest leaves, added a certain amount of character to the house, which it otherwise would have wanted. It was very retired; in the semi-obscurity of a setting sun it was almost *triste;* and the deep shadows upon the little lawn impressed the superstitious with a feeling of melancholy, not always displeasing, nor very un-Irish.

The persons who had just disembarked from the boat were (as might have been supposed) a man and a woman. For the development of mystery this union of sexes is indispensable. The strong arm and stubborn will of man require the passionate earnestness of woman to assist or to thwart him. The woman had moved a few steps on to the lawn, or rather grass-plot, and now stopped, watching her companion, as he fastened the boat sufficiently to secure her from

drifting down the stream. They were both eminently handsome, and still young, though not in their *première jeunesse*. The woman was about seven-and-twenty, of very delicate and ladylike proportions. Her face, as a mere question of feature, was sufficiently beautiful, but its charms were enhanced by an expression which told of love, of fidelity in suffering, of truthfulness, of dependence, of everything most womanlike. It told, too, of anxiety, but not for self—of care for others deeper than for any suffering of her own. The man, who by this time had joined her, was also a very handsome person: less strictly so than the woman, perhaps, in feature. He was, besides, considerably older, though still an upright, active, and well-made man. He had the appearance, essentially, of a gentleman; but he had a restless, unsettled gaze, and a face in which there was written in a strong hand—impulse, sensuality, self-will. There was no command either of self or others in those handsome large dark eyes, or in that full lip and ruddy complexion. But as he stood by his wife (for such was their relationship), they moved a noble couple; and few would have remarked

these physiognomical defects upon a first inspection. He was dressed in a sombrero, and a pilot coat, which he had just put on, and which he buttoned as he leisurely approached his companion.

"Oh! Arthur, Arthur, how happy we might be here but for these wretched separations; and if not here, elsewhere; all places are the same to me, if you could only be as you once were, and with me and the boy."

"Better perhaps as it is, Norah."

"No! impossible. Whatever the sorrow, whatever the mystery, surely it may be better borne when shared with your wife."

"You would only be teased by the daily annoyance of my difficulties, and could never relieve them."

"Try me, Arthur. For what did I marry you? Was it because you were rich; because you promised me a great house and many luxuries? Did ye come courting like a fine gentleman, when ye cantered over on your ragged-looking pony," said Norah, with a touch of humour, in spite of her anxieties; "and in the old shooting-jacket that Mike begged to frighten away the

birds? It wasn't till the day you were married I knew you'd a decent coat to your back."

"You married me because you loved me; and it would have been better that you had been buried first," said the man, bitterly. "It's no use, Norah; don't ask me; I can tell you nothing, except this, that I must leave you again for England. Be a good girl, and take care of yourself and the boy. Some day we'll try and leave this place and every sorrow behind us; but it can't be yet. What does the boy do with himself all day?"

"He goes to school in the morning, and seems to be getting on well; but I hardly know much of his schoolfellows. He is usually fishing all the afternoon; and is always teasing to know when he's to have the pony you have so long talked about."

"Let him fish, Norah; it's an innocent amusement, as long as he does not fall into the river: but keep him away from horseflesh; the less he ever knows of it the better; it's been very little good to me. But now I must go to meet Burke. I have a word of business to say to him to-night."

"Well! don't be long. But don't bring Burke here; I've seen him once, and I don't like him. Arthur, dear Arthur, these men frighten me; they are at the bottom of all our sorrow and mystery; trust me, and confide in me. If I can do nothing else for you, I can pray for you, or die for you, but I cannot leave you."

Whilst Arthur Kildonald unfastens his skiff, and rows across the river to his rendezvous, I will endeavour to place him before the reader in his true light. He was the son of a man of small but independent property in the west of Ireland, who without influence or position was too much of a gentleman to work for his bread. There are more such in many parts of Ireland, east, west, north, and south. He had, as a boy, but a very moderate education, but he had the advantage, if it may be so called, of a close proximity to a garrison town; and his father's idle habits and congenial disposition brought him into continual intercourse with the officers. Arthur grew up singularly handsome, and with all those tastes for riding and shooting, and every sort of sport, for which his physical powers and activity so well fitted him. At an early age

he was an adept at all games of skill, as of chance. His dexterity as a pigeon-shot found him no unwelcome supplies of pocket-money; and his horsemanship procured him many a good mount in amateur steeple-chases, by which he acquired something more useful to him than reputation. It is difficult to conceive a course of life more fitted to eradicate all good, and to sow the seeds of much evil. A naturally good disposition soon gave way to the contaminating influences of self-indulgence and gambling. Very little remained to him at the age of five-and-twenty but a questionable recklessness in money matters, which was occasionally mistaken for generosity, and a certain softness of character which rendered him the prey of designing women and men. With the former he was supposed to have had some successes—an idea which his vanity encouraged. With the latter he was always either a tool or a hero. He had much personal courage; and constant admixture with the world had given him a readiness which served him in moments of danger or difficulty.

His father's death opened the realities of life to him. Up to that period he had been entirely

ignorant of his social position. He awoke to find himself an orphan, which gave him little trouble, and a beggar, which was a crushing evil. Hitherto he had not felt the want of money; now and henceforth his life was to be a struggle with the world. It so happened that the small property, of which his father may have been rather said to have received the rents than to have been in possession, eventually came to the hammer; and was bought by Mr. Thornhill, of Thornhills, an English gentleman of large fortune, at a price which just served to pay off the mortgages upon it, a few personal debts, and to provide funds for his funeral, which fortunately happened at no great distance of time. With a blindness peculiar to men of violent impulses, Arthur Kildonald could never divest himself of the notion that a great wrong had been done him by the Thornhill family; and though at that time they were quite unknown to him, he cherished a most foolish, almost frantic, antipathy to them all. The name of Thornhill stank in his nostrils; and a savage longing even then possessed him of some day wiping out an imaginary stain upon his position in society. From

that time he led a life of dissipation, supported upon the small remnants of his property, or by the association which he formed with gamblers of every degree, and more especially upon the turf. His connexion with these men led him frequently to England. Indeed, for several years he had lived at least eight months out of the twelve in that country; and a charming manner and congenial pursuits gave him an *entrée* into at least the confines of good men's society. I say men's society—for when I hear of acquaintanceship formed under any circumstances but those of perfect social equality, I always inquire whether it extends to the ladies of the family. English sporting men are remarkably *inexigéant* as regards men, but they are very particular that the female apartments are invaded by no unacknowledged foot. In England he was known only as an unmarried man; in Ireland his marriage was suspected by all, who did not give him credit for a *liaison* of a very romantic nature.

Such had been, and still was, the man who now moored his skiff on the left bank of the Lee, a short way lower down the stream than his own house, and on the opposite side of the river.

He stepped lightly on shore, lit a cigar, and walked leisurely inland towards a small inn, which he quickly recognised by a horn lantern, swinging inside of the door, and shedding its dim lustre over a circuit of a few hundred yards.

"Is Mr. Burke here, Patrick?"

"Is it Lawyer Burke, him as rides the bay cob, yer honour?"

"The same, and a very handsome cob it is," said Kildonald; "a little light below the knee, but a fine mover: how long has he been here?"

"He's taken his first tumbler, and maybe he'll be wanting a second by this time. Will I hould a light to yer honour?" said Patrick, as he preceded Kildonald to a small but tolerably comfortable little room, where there was a small turf fire, and Mr. Burke was enjoying a good hot glass of whisky punch, which had been brought to him upon his arrival, some ten minutes before.

Patrick busied himself for a minute or two about the fire, and then looked at the tumbler, and then at the little kettle, whilst the two gentlemen saluted each other in the customary manner of men who meet pretty frequently, but without great love for one another. As soon,

however, as the door closed, Burke, drawing his chair closer to Kildonald, asked somewhat abruptly—

"You got my letter, I suppose?"

"I did."

"Can nothing be done?"

"Nothing in this case; the horse must win if all goes right; he's a stone better than the mare, and there's nothing else worth mentioning in the race."

"By G— he must not win! it's absolute ruin;" and Burke moved uneasily on his chair. "Listen, Kildonald; he belongs to Sir Frederick Marston; can money do nothing with his trainer? Is he to be got at?"

"Simply absurd. Where we can give hundreds he can give thousands. Besides, I know the man, and nothing of that kind can save you. You must stand to be shot at."

"I tell you every man has his price; faith, he was no fool that discovered that!"

"And I tell you that Turner has not his price; if he has it's beyond your purse and mine: he's the honestest trainer in England."

"Ye might have added Ireland too, and not

made it a great compliment anyhow," said Mr. Burke, whose own experience was not of the most encouraging. "Who rides him?"

"It's not known: it's a gentleman's race, and will be run on its merits."

"A gentleman's race! Come, Captain, there's hope yet. They're worse than the jockeys, and a great deal poorer. Are you up?"

"Not yet. But I go to England to-morrow, and know nothing till then. Lord Castleton might have the mount, but can't ride the weight."

"Can you? You've ridden Sir Frederick's horses before this: if you can manage this you may stand two thousand to nothing on it. If not—— the game's over, and once over with me, you know what follows."

"Enough, enough, sir: I have submitted to these threats too frequently not to know what is coming." At the conclusion of Burke's speech Kildonald had risen quickly from the seat he had hitherto occupied. His breath came rapidly, his voice quivered with passion, and his face wore a paleness terrible to contemplate: it had in it a shade of fear, which in a constitutionally brave

man bespeaks an inability of action more sickening than any outburst of rage. A lion before the braying of an ass is said to stand cowed, or to crouch trembling at the unearthly sound; and a man of physical power in the meshes of his own vices is an object equally pitiful. Indeed, when he recovered his usual speech his words lacked that hearty ring which real passion lends, and sent forth an uncertain sound tinctured by some motive of feeling undefined. "I have said it is impossible; is my position to go for nothing? Am I to be insulted by proposals which cannot be made with safety to the meanest of your confederates? I am in your power, but I will not be reminded of it every time your accursed avarice makes me an unwilling tool in hands that I despise. You—you—you forget who I am."

Burke, too, had risen, and the fancied advantages of birth and the real advantages of manner and appearance were very obvious. Burke was a broad-shouldered and singularly vulgar-looking man: his head was large, his features coarse, and a profusion of red hair and whisker gave him a *farouche* appearance. Low cunning was the

predominant expression of his face, but it was mixed with a roistering air, which sat not badly on one whose avocation, to all appearance, was that of a middle-class horse-dealer. He was really a sporting lawyer.

"Faith, Mr. Kildonald, I'll not forget *what* ye are." And here Burke paused, for he was not sure how far he might drive his confederate to defy him, and to break a bond which, from too frequent irritation, was becoming intolerable. His cunning was not the *finesse* which plays with the emotions of men, as with facts, or he might have read, in his companion's face or manner, capitulation upon any terms. "However, it's impossible, is it? I'd like to see the thing on the cards that's impossible with you and me. And I've a heavy book on The Leger, too; and if Sir Frederick's horse wins this I'll never see it out. Seven thousand to Thornhill alone, and ——"

"Hold," said Kildonald; "did you say Thornhill? Has he much money on? Quick, man; has he backed Sir Frederick's horse for a stake? Tell me at once." And such was his vehemence that Burke could not help seeing that his point

was gained, and for some reason or other Thornhill's fancy would prove his safeguard; so he replied without much hesitation, and with quite as little truth, that he had backed the horse heavily for The Aristocratic Handicap, and must be very short of money if the gray lost for some time to come. In fact, with a tact which did him credit, although not knowing the extent or power of the feeling, he put a finishing touch to his last *coup* by asserting that the Irish property must be in the market before long, unless there came a slice of luck, which could only happen through the success of the gentlemen whom Thornhill's *esprit de corps* induced him always to back. "Ah! they all sink or swim together, and they all back their fancy; and when once a man has a prejudice, and will back it, it doesn't take long to land him: they're soon high and dry after that."

The passions which had been roused in Kildonald, partly by the sense of indignity and dependence, and partly by his fears, were beginning to cool. Not so his hatred of Burke. But at the present moment his thoughts had been most opportunely directed into a new chan-

nel. He had two objects in view, both of which seemed once more within his grasp. The one uppermost in his mind was an opportunity of escape from his present position, which he imagined a safe retreat on the Continent would give him; the other was an opportunity of revenging himself upon the family whom he unjustly regarded as his oppressors and the usurpers of his birthright. Another motive urged him, of a less interested nature, though not equally powerful, the withdrawal of his wife and children, especially of his boy, from scenes which his natural and acquired refinement showed him to be demoralising and dangerous. However unprincipled in the main, unless utterly worthless, there are few men unactuated by a sense of affection for those dependent upon them. Kildonald was well content to pass his life, or a great portion of it, in pleasures which could not be shared with Norah and her children. The excitement of the gaming-table, the luxuries of the clubs, and the society of men and women of questionable character, above all, the fashionable vices in which he indulged, could never have existed for him as a married man. He knew

that the moment he should become hampered by domestic ties, the life he had so long led, and to which he was so much attached, would be closed to him. Men were satisfied with a polished exterior and a capacity for congenial pursuits which his straitened circumstances and fluctuating fortunes could never have commanded had he once exhibited himself in another character in London. Arthur Kildonald, a lounger, a club man, a fine, but not successful whist-player, the best gentleman jockey of his day, and a constant *habitué* of every race-course in England, was sufficiently *recherché* to pass with men for what he seemed to be, without any close questioning as to what he had been. There was not one of his associates who cared, indeed, to know more of him than that he had a bowing acquaintance with most good men in town; and if whispers had ever been heard as to his stability, or his claim to the position he thus held, they had never been raised beyond a whisper, or interested any one further than to close the doors of certain *salons* against his reception. He was not affected by it. He never sought greater intimacy in any house than such as answered his own purposes.

He read with indifference "The Morning Post" accounts of festivities into which he cared not to intrude; and when the season was over, he was well satisfied to forego the pleasures of a country house, and the moors or stubbles, for the charms of Baden or Homburg, whence he usually returned to Mount Donald, as he called his cottage on the Lee, to share his good or bad fortune with his family. Thoroughly selfish, thoroughly unprincipled, this may still be said for him—that, when within the influence of Norah and his children, he was kind and affectionate, and cherished intentions enough to have paved Cork, in addition to a place which is said to be pretty well paved already. It is useless to attempt to analyse such feelings; some have suggested one motive principle, some another: the majority of philosophers have made it arise from self-love in the power inherent in the protective faculty. In the present case it was, like the loadstone, strong enough, but it required to be brought within the focus of magnetic attraction.

But Kildonald had seen enough of men, and of Englishmen especially, to know that, whatever his present position amongst them, a small house

in a suburb, or lodgings in a less inhabitable *quartier*, a cold shoulder of mutton, weekly bills undischarged, and a wife, however charming, if badly dressed, were things not likely to enhance his own value in the eyes of his present companions; and he took care, whether honourably or wisely, or not, to run no risk of losing caste by any such *escapade*. The ground he stood upon was not perhaps the best soil, but, such as it was, it answered his purpose, and he stuck to it. His business was to live: and to live at other people's expense. The world was his oyster; and if he opened it with a roughish knife, and sometimes cut his fingers, he managed to extract the morsel. With these thoughts, and such as these, passing through his mind, he resumed his seat with an eager and irritable look, but with a fixed determination to go through the disagreeable ordeal which awaited him.

Had his confederate been a gentleman (for confederates they were to a certain extent), he would have felt but few qualms. But the grossness and vulgarity with which Burke proposed a robbery took from its charms, and left but little margin for the imagination.

"Can ye ride the horse?" said he, when affairs had once more settled into business. "Will Sir Frederick give ye the mount?"

"He will," answered the other, laconically.

"And can he win as he likes?"

"Or lose, I suppose you mean."

"Perhaps I do."

"Then why not say so? there's no necessity for any delicacy about the matter, unless ye think Patrick's, maybe, at the keyhole."

"If he is he'll catch nothing but a cold in the eye. It's mighty little he'll learn from your conversation, anyhow;" and as the whisky warmed Mr. Burke, he became more Irish than usual.

"And what's to prevent me winning, and landing a stake worth double of your paltry offer?"

"Because winning is never a certainty, and it wouldn't suit us to do so. Besides, they'll be scarce that 'ud lay ye two thousand to nothing about it, either way."

"It's dangerous, but I can do it," said Kildonald, thoughtfully.

"Indeed ye can; there isn't such a horseman this side of Kildare, nor the other, for the

matter o' that. Make it a certainty, and say three thousand to nothing."

"It is a certainty." And without another word he quitted the room, leaving his friend to digest his whisky-and-water and the chances of "a certainty" together.

CHAPTER II.

THE BATTLE.

"And like the impatient steed of war,
He snuff'd the battle from afar."
Marmion.

"Go it, Charlie, keep your head up: by Jove, that's a finisher!" said Bob Wilkinson, the cock of the school, as the baker's boy dropped to a well-delivered left-hander of his opponent. "Beautifully done! You must win now; about two more rounds will settle it," added he, as he pulled back Charlie to his second's knee. "Here, give us the sponge, and carry the pail over to the baker; fair play's a jewel, you know;" saying which he threw the damp sponge at the baker's backers, and dismissed a little fellow with a stable pail to the opposition party, who certainly looked in want of it.

"I hope old Gresham won't turn up before the finish; what a row there'll be if he finds it out," said a dark-eyed young Pickle, who seemed

quite as much alive to the fun as to the danger of the master's arrival. "Another five minutes and we shall win, and we'll give Thornhill a jolly feed at old Mother Tucker's, after second school to-morrow."

"The Doctor's all safe at private lesson, and there's Humphreys minor looking out for Willis, at the bottom of the school lane—he's always sneaking. Now then, time's up, you fellows, give him room: eighteenpence to sixpence Charlie licks him this round." This liberal offer, which was not responded to, was made by a very sporting-looking young gentleman, with a short stick, and a hat considerably the worse for wear. His name was Stebbing; he was the great sporting authority of the school, and took manifest interest in the present contest.

"Don't let him close, Charlie—keep well away; well stopped," said his second, as the baker made a vigorous but ineffectual attempt at a rally: "now go in;" and Charlie Thornhill—for it was he—with a coolness that would have done honour to Mr. Sayers, finding the baker a little short of wind after his last effort, followed him up and terminated the round by a "one,

two, three," of so scientific a character, that young Muffins, as he was politely called, failed to come to time: and the Dunce of the Family was hailed the victor, amidst the cheers of his school-fellows, and the sad disappointment of the "cads."

The fight had taken place on a greensward, close by the side of the river, and within no great distance of the school. It was a public thoroughfare, used alike by the Doctor's boys for the purpose of walking or boating, and by the townspeople as a short cut to a more distant part of the parish. It is not surprising that it gave rise to an occasional squabble between the two, which ended not unfrequently in a fight, as in the present case, when two young gentlemen met, whose vanity or obstinacy lay in that direction. When there is a determination to bring affairs to a crisis, there is never any difficulty in finding a reasonable cause; and the politest or quietest man in the world usually has a weak point, if you only know where to find it. There can be no particular pleasure in walking in close proximity to a very dirty wall, abutting on some still more filthy buildings, in preference to about

fifty yards of greensward, which ran between it and the river. Yet this was the particular fancy of these young gentlemen; and on that account an honour coveted particularly by the boys of the town. It was certainly mortifying enough that the blood of a Howard, or the bone of a less aristocratic scion of the banking or brewing interest, should have to yield to the superior weight of young Muffins, Slaughter, or Codfish, as the case might be, backed by a turbulent crowd of young cordwainers, leathersellers, and publicans, only bent upon "smashing the swells," as they were pleased to call the little aristocrats of one of the most celebrated schools of its day. But when insult was added to injury, in half a dozen inexplicable ways, only conceivable to the schoolboy mind, what wonder that, regardless of odds, scarcely a week passed without either a single combat, on such approved rules of fistic etiquette, as to remind us of Holingshed's "Chronicles," and the Mowbrays and Norfolks of former ages; or such a general *mêlée* as to rival the celebrated battle of Brenville itself. The credit of Dr. Gresham was almost at stake, so constant and direful had these conflicts

become. A black eye was the normal condition of one half of the school, at least; and a poor glazier in the suburbs, gained a very handsome livelihood by his skill in making black white, "in painting the lily, in colouring the rose," and in a knowledge of flesh tints, which might have been a lesson to Etty himself.

The present was one of these charming little affairs, in which nobody seemed to know which was the aggressor. As far as the account had as yet proceeded, it appears that young Cadwallader, a Welshman of high descent and small of person, had attempted to secure the much-desired wall, at the no small risk of being poisoned on the one hand, or squeezed to death on the other. A baker's boy, not unknown to fame amongst his compatriots as a great patron of the noble science, and constantly engaged in strife, asserted his right, as a representative for the borough interests. Being twice as strong, and considerably older, he was not long in setting aside Cadwallader and his claims, and nearly smothering him into the bargain, with his basket, from which he had been delivering bread, in one of the but little fashionable *quartiers*

of the town. But punishment overtakes the unjust man, and sometimes with no slow foot. At a sudden turning in the wall about a dozen of the Doctor's boys beheld the unequal contest, on their way to their boat; and the baker was taken red-handed. Charlie Thornhill was in advance of his schoolfellows by about twenty yards; there appeared to be a short and decisive parley, an exchange of some elegant language, not altogether parliamentary, and a very decisive blow from Thornhill, which settled the question of the wall by almost knocking the baker into it. He was certainly taken a little aback by the vigorous energy of the blow; but we have heard that much is fair in love and war which would not obtain under ordinary circumstances. The first blow is a great point gained. All I advise is, that it be strong enough. It is a rule of very ancient standing that you should first make up your mind whether you mean fighting or not, and then put as much energy as possible into your attack. We must do the English the justice to say, that fair play is their characteristic; and no sooner was it clear that the matter was to be decided by force of arms, than

a ring was made, and Muffins received the same kindly and delicate attentions as Charlie himself —of course not with quite the same feeling. However, a few minutes served to bring down a host of the baker's friends, and the battle proceeded with a charming regularity, up to the time when we introduced our readers to the scene.

The baker was far the superior in size and strength; but he had neither the condition nor the science of Charlie. He fought well and lustily for three-quarters of an hour; was defeated at every point; and when his face was like an unbaked apple dumpling, and his opponent looked nearly as fresh as when the battle began, he took the advice of his backer, one-eyed Joey, a celebrated dog's-meat man, and retired from the contest, knocked completely out of time.

"Here, Charlie, put on your coat, and make haste, old fellow; we'll go down the back way over the wall: if any of the masters see us, they'll be sure to know there's been a row; and old Gresham swears he'll flog the next fellow he catches fighting with the cads." So Charlie, not

a little elated with his victory, and with the muscles of his face already beginning to stiffen, but with no extraordinary marks of punishment about him, began deliberately to put on his waistcoat and his coat, and to put himself into such a condition as to attract as little attention as possible—which has not been the usual characteristic of conquerors from Alexander the Great down to Napoleon the Third. Charlie did most things with deliberation, and through life it left him fewer things to undo.

"Don't you think he had better go to Payne's, and have a coat of paint on that left eye?" said Reginald Glanville, who considered personal appearances before all other things; and being a chum of Thornhill's was not anxious to be deprived of his little *protégé* even for a week. "I'm quite sure his left eye will be as black as a coal before evening chapel, and he won't be able to go into the town for a month."

"Never mind his beauty, Dolly," said a young ruffian with a flat nose, and a shock head of red hair, familiarly known as Paddy Carey, from a favourite song to which he treated his room upon all occasions of musical display, but whose real

name was O'Brien; "never mind his beauty, Dolly, he'll be handsome enough to keep you company any way: if you've such a taste for the fine arts, there's the baker just gone home, and he'd be a subject worthy of the glazier's talents. Bedad, Charlie looks as handsome as paint itself; and when he's had a raw beefsteak on his left eye with the gravy in it, and a cooked one in his stomach, he'll not know that he's been out of the private lesson room to-day."

"Grave onus," sighed Bob Wilkinson, who was a punster as well as a pugilist.

During this colloquy, and the usual congratulatory remarks which follow on success, at least from the winning side, the boys had continued standing about on the edge of the water, discussing the ups and downs of the late fight; the extraordinary pluck of their young schoolfellow; the certainty of his being flogged if he were found out; the chances of detection; and the excuses to be made in the event of such an untoward result.

There are always some good men, anxious to do their duty so well, however unpleasant, that

they may be able to make up for those who are less careful of their responsibilities. I have especially remarked this to be the case with the under-masters in our large grammar schools, where there is always one or more who would willingly compound for want of capacity in school, by an amazing assiduity in the detection of offences, and in bringing the offenders to condign punishment. Dr. Gresham's was no exception to this rule; the Doctor's active mind expended itself upon the Greek article, the digamma, and the particle *ἀν*; his second master on the dialects peculiar to the Greek Testament writers; a third on the metres of the Aristophanic choruses, and the philosophy of the Tusculan disputations; whilst a fourth took compensation for his mental incapacity, or indolence, by the utmost activity in the discovery of mischief. The improvement which has taken place of late years in the system of scholastic education in this country, *in really accredited establishments*, is so very considerable, that few complaints of unfair espial can ever be made. The great public schools have generally been free from it; but where dirty work is to be done, there are always tools to do it, which leave

the hands of the employers comparatively clean in the world's eye.

Dr. Gresham would with pleasure have pounced upon the actors in the late scene; but as he was engaged at the moment in a private lecture, in which the question at issue was the probable consequences to the world of the conquest of Syracuse by the Athenians instead of the Romans, there was no prospect of his ever securing an offender for himself. But he would have been very much horrified at the necessity of sitting perdu behind a wall for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, to prevent or to punish anything short of immorality or vice. His junior master, Willis, was of a different opinion as to ends and means; and whilst our young friends had been exulting in the successful termination of an hour's charming sport to every one but the principal actors, Mr. Willis had been watching the proceeding in security, and now presented himself unexpectedly among them, to inquire more minutely into particulars, and to be sure that his eyesight had not deceived him in the persons engaged. Having satisfied himself upon these points, taken another cheerful view of the chief

actors in the drama, added a note or two to his memoranda, and buttoned his coat across the chest with a sort of conscious rectitude of purpose quite inimitable by a truly honest man, he departed.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONSULTATION.

"Wer lügt, um einem Andern zu schaden, der ist ein böser Bube: wer aber lügt, um sich selbst aus der noth zu helfen, der ist ein schuldige Memme."—*German Proverb.*

"I SAY, Russell, we shall get into a horrid row about this fight of Charlie Thornhill's: I knew that brute Willis would be sneaking somewhere. Thornhill's certain to be flogged, and so will any fourth-form boys that were caught."

"I don't believe he put my name down at all," said Russell, throwing himself into a chair; "if he did it's only a book of Homer, and we can swear the cads began it. I told Thornhill to come up here after dinner, and Wilkinson, and O'Brien, and the rest of the fellows who were in it. I can't think why he makes such a horrid row about it."

This conversation was going on in one of the studies between Russell and Glanville, who had come up from their house to the study, to get up

their afternoon's lesson, and to concert measures for mitigating the Doctor's anger, which was supposed to be great.

"I believe Jabez Smith to be worse than Willis. He puts old Gresham up to all these sorts of things," said Glanville. "He tells him it's not gentlemanly. How should he know what's gentlemanly or not? Oh! here come the other fellows. I wonder whether Willis has said anything about it to Thornhill: he's in his house." And the door opened, and in walked half a dozen of the principal abettors of the late affair of honour, the victor among them.

"Did Willis say anything at dinner about it, Thornhill?" said Wilkinson, who came in at that moment with two or three books under his arm, and a short but formidable stick laden with lead at the top, and which added materially to his appearance as a conspirator.

"Yes; he said a great deal about his duty. You know he always does. And he said it would be a very serious matter for the fifth and sixth-form boys that were there."

"Say the cads began it," said a bold, confident voice, which proceeded from a handsome but

unabashed junior, who was in the study more by sufferance than right.

"That's all very fine," said the hero; "but they didn't. Cadwallader owned to me that he was entirely to blame."

"Then if I were you I should lick Cadwallader for getting me into a row. It's entirely his conceit. I suppose he would have the wall. It's his fault, 'Qui facit per alium facit per se.'" And here the speaker assumed an attitude of considerable importance: as of one who had said a really clever thing.

"I don't think it's worth telling a lie about," said Thornhill, "at all events." And as he spoke he blushed and hung his head, having evidently made a remark which was not likely to meet with general approbation.

"Well, that's all very fine," said Russell. "You're certain to be flogged, anyhow, and we may be sent away; the least is a book of Homer, or an imposition of a hundred lines every day for a fortnight. It's just enough to prevent one's going up to the Castle on Saturday. By Jingo! how black your eye's getting."

"I think it's as well to tell the truth about it,

if Thornhill don't care," said Bob Wilkinson. "As to that confounded Willis"—and here he brought down his leaded stick, which, we regret to say, was used for knocking rabbits on the head and other poaching purposes, upon one of the two study tables with dangerous violence—"he ought to have his neck broken. There's not another master in the school would have sneaked in that way. Jabez might put the Doctor up to a thing or two *for our good;* but he would have walked straight into us in a gentlemanly manner, as he calls it, and booked us on the spot."

"The long and the short of it is, we did begin," said Charlie. "There's no denying it; and I should not like to look the old Doctor in the face and tell him a crammer. He always behaves like a gentleman to us, and we shall get off pretty easy if we do the same by him." It will be observed that the speaker was younger and lower in the school than any one present. He was singularly deficient in the learning which gave a boy power in those days: he wrote neither longs and shorts, nor Greek iambics; he was miserably dull at all scholarship; but he had a great reputation as a runner and jumper, a cricketer, a

horseman, and an oar. He had a handsome, cheerful face, indicative of determination rather than passion; a good manner, but thoroughly boyish in all its ways; and an utter freedom from anything like affectation. He might be said scarcely to know what fear was. He had no great flow of spirits, but was rather thoughtful, and his humour took the turn for droll images and illustration rather than for wit or repartee. Books he hated; but he never gave his masters reason to doubt him, as he honestly confessed to all the help he got from the upper boys when accused of it; and whilst his place was amongst his juniors in school, he was always to be seen arm-in-arm with his seniors out of school.

Some philosophers, with more recollection of their boyhood than virtues of their own, have affirmed that all children are by nature cowards and liars. We regret to be obliged to differ from these learned persons, or to oppose our own speculations to their personal experiences. But though we are not inclined to go with them to the full extent of their assertions, we are obliged reluctantly to admit that truth is not the distinguishing feature of youth. We believe many are

made liars by a certain constitutional weakness or fear of the results of truth-speaking. They have not found that advantage in veracity for which they have been taught to look. With all that our nature has to answer for, we prefer to affix this stigma to their education, and should like to visit upon their instructors that punishment which too frequently falls upon innocent shoulders. In the world the mummeries and the glare of fashion will not sparkle so brightly by the naked light of day as under the false splendour of candle-light, which may be in some sort compared to falsehood. Alloy in gold and silver is found to render the precious metal malleable and useful, and more fitted for every-day work, whilst it debases the coin and detracts from its true value. But those who know the intrinsic worth of the unadulterated mineral will not part with it for the specious mixture, any more than they who have found the inestimable price of truth will exchange it for the current coin of falsehood. If the world gives a boy no knowledge of the advantages of honesty, it can scarcely blame him for using that which appears to possess a practical superiority over it. The excel-

lence of truth, even in the world, is evinced in the fact that a lie is only valuable according to its capacity for representing what is true: and amongst boys there is an innate estimation of "the honest," though they are frequently averse to practise what they admire. The truthfulness of Charlie Thornhill was, unwittingly, the secret of his popularity. Courage, especially physical courage, is not a rare quality, and is frequently dependent on material conformation; but the courage which despises falsehood in a society which is false, will always command respect, although it sometimes fails of success.

"There goes the bell, and I haven't looked at my Horace. I'm sure to be called up; give us a construe, Cleverley, that's a good fellow. I only want the last part. Simpson's sure to be called up before me; he hasn't been put on this week." And all speculation on the late fight and its consequences was at once merged in "Et militavi non sine gloria;" of which charming little ode, its meaning or construction, Master Charlie was shortly found to be sublimely ignorant. He derived considerable consolation, however, from the fact that had he only been put on, according

to his calculation, at the end of the lesson instead of at the beginning, he should have given a not very original, but a very excellent translation, derived from the joint efforts of Cleverley and a crib during the five minutes of probation after the ringing of the school-bell.

After afternoon school, and before the locking up for the night, it was the custom of Dr. Gresham, or one of his masters, to read prayers, which consisted of portions of the liturgy and the lessons for the day, in the school chapel. I am not quite sure of the light in which the learned Doctor regarded this portion of scholastic duty. If not so reverently as might be, I must beg the reader to bear in mind that it was in days before the contention between High Church and Low Church and No Church had assumed such marked features as now; when a test as strong, though not so comprehensible, must be applied to schoolmasters and teachers as the Corporation Act itself. I can, however, affirm that for the boys themselves it was robbed of its religious character to a certain extent by the custom of learning the morning's repetition during the psalms, and by the calling over which imme-

diately followed. Neither do I think that the religious sentiment was much strengthened by the habit of standing in crowds at the chapel door, and administering condign punishment to public offenders against scholastic etiquette, refractory fags, the unwashed, and the miserable and uncongenial of every degree. I think many of them must have prayed heartily for release from, or power over, their oppressors; and many a vow was registered as to how they would lick their fags when their turn came. Beyond that I know not what the supplications might have been.

On the evening in question the prayers were finished, and the monitor had called over; but the Doctor did not leave his seat, and his arched and strongly-marked eyebrows contracted with an unwonted frown.

"Wilkinson, Russell, Glanville, Cleverley," said the Doctor; and then there was a pause, whilst he prepared his pencil with a knife: it was before the common days of Mordan and Co. Then he continued, in a voice more awfully sonorous than before, striking dismay into the palpitating bosoms before him, "O'Brien, Jen-

kinson major, Walker, Thornhill, and Cadwallader, stand out;" and out they stood. "The monitor has brought me your names, as being concerned in another disgraceful scene with the town's boys. Follow me into my study. The monitor will attend."

Here was a pretty state of things. The chapel was the recognised place for the settlement of all such public wrongs. Nothing but the most heinous offences ever found their way to the Doctor's sanctum, which consisted of all the mystery which oaken bookcases, Elizabethan windows, crimson curtains, coats of arms, and the oldest black letter in folio volumes could impart. If the Doctor was heavily learned in school, grandly solemn in chapel, playfully erudite in society, he was simply awful and sublime in his study. Here complaints of private wrong were heard, and grievances redressed: the Doctor's study was a templum cut off from vulgar tread, and approachable only by sixth-form high-lows. Their case was evidently a heavy one; and they followed the monitor in a few minutes in melancholy silence into the precincts of the unwritten law.

The great man—and he was a great man, if great and varied learning, and a capability of imparting it, could make him so—was already seated. Ponderous tomes of reference ornamented the chairs and tables, even the very floor. Manuscript sheets lay before him, and rolls of uncorrected letter-press in Greek, Latin, and Sanscrit. The room, handsomely furnished as it was, smelt of the mighty ancients: a tomb of their remains, which were to blossom again with branches more thickly laden with fruit than ever; and the Doctor was the high priest of the whole. Here and there a sixth-form exercise of Sapphics or Alcaics, or a translation from Shakespeare into Greek iambics, with the Doctor's nervous corrections and erasures, alone connected him with the little world below.

"And so—so—so you've been fighting again, I hear; ay, ay. What is the meaning of this?" said Dr. Gresham, with a curious, absent hesitation, as if he were looking for a Sanscrit root in the middle of it all. "You've been fighting," said he, with a grim smile.

"Yes, sir."

"And with whom, with whom was it?"

"With the cads, sir," said O'Brien, the descendant from the kings of Ulster.

"With whom, sir?" said the Doctor, not unmindful of his dignity.

"Oh! I beg your pardon, sir. With the snobs—the town's boys, I mean, sir."

"And which was the aggressor, young gentlemen?"

A silence of some seconds. "I was, sir," said Thornhill.

"And who is I, pray?" The Doctor loved to forget names as much as the members of a certain august family are said to remember them.

"Thornhill, sir."

"Thornhill, Thornhill. And whose house is he in? and in which form? Have you got your remove, boy?"

"No, sir. I shall have it next half."

"Not if you don't do better than last time," said the Doctor, who became suddenly alive to the claims of Charlie to distinction. "Not if you don't do better. Did you know my orders about fighting with the town's boys? Did you know that I intended to flog the first boy that

was caught, or to send him away? You're very likely to get your remove, some of you—some of you." And here the Doctor gave another short laugh, which boded better for the delinquents. "And—come nearer, Thornhill; nearer still, boy. Why, you have got a black eye!" And here the venerable sage looked as if that was a most unreasonable result of a three-quarters of an hour's fight.

"If you please, sir, we found Muffins—I beg your pardon, sir, I mean the baker's boy, quarrelling with one of the little fellows, and——"

"And you went to help him. Well—well, I shall see all about it to-morrow; but don't go out from the school-fields till you hear from me again. Thornhill—Thornhill—ay! I must flog Thornhill; he's been sent down twice in the last week, and now he's got a black eye in a fight with a baker. Stay. Monitor, bring Thornhill into the upper school to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, and the names of the rest who were with him. Take care, take care, young gentlemen. Wilkinson and O'Brien, you're old enough to know better; but I've got my eye upon some of you. Go along, go

along;" and the Doctor was already deep in his new work, an edition of Aristophanes.

The immense advantages of flogging would fill a volume. What a horrible thing is that promiscuous laceration of the back, arms, and shoulders, by a cane! always at the mercy of momentary impulse. But there is a dignity in flogging. It comes after a night's reflection, and leaves an opening for extenuating circumstances to appear. Besides, whilst there's life there's hope, and no one knows what may happen to divert the execution of a sentence, however just. And yet Charlie Thornhill declared he wouldn't be flogged. He didn't care whether he was a fourth-form boy, or not; he would not be flogged. And when Charlie Thornhill said a thing, they knew that he meant it.

The next morning was looked for with intense anxiety by his schoolfellows, not so much on their own account, as to see or hear the result of Thornhill's determination. Such a thing as a young gentleman's resistance to a flogging, who had not yet attained the privileged form, was unheard of. And yet Thornhill did not look as if he ought to be flogged.

Strange to say, on the following day, after morning Chapel, the Doctor's own servant, Mr. Bandy, appeared in Willis's house, with a desire for Mr. Thornhill "to step this way."

Many were the conjectures as to what had taken place, when, half an hour after, a fly was at the door. Charlie Thornhill was on his way to meet his brother, with undefined fears and a heavy heart, but without his flogging.

It was not known till some days after that a mysterious fate had robbed the boys of a kind and generous father. Squire Thornhill had been shot on his road back from Bidborough races. But we must retrace our steps, to explain the position of our hero, and the circumstances which left him fatherless at so early an age.

CHAPTER IV.

"MY FRIEND GEOFFREY."

"Celui qui remplissait alors cette place était un gentilhomme!"

One of the most beautiful places in the midland counties of England is Thornhills. At one extremity of a park remarkable for its natural variations of soil, its rank luxuriance of heather and fern, its gnarled and twisted oaks, its masses of wood and water, and on its outskirts for the richness of its produce and the state of cultivation to which it has been brought, stands the house, a noble specimen of the early Tudor style. Its magnificent hall opens on every side but one to rooms of grand and lofty proportions, lighted, or rather obscured, by deeply mullioned windows, not unfrequently enriched by the emblazonment of heraldry, and still retaining the shields of the new nobility to whom it had been granted at the close of the Wars of the Roses, when the Lancastrian Henry rewarded some of

his most active followers with the spoils of the extinct Yorkists. On the walls still hang the well-preserved memorials of the chase or war. A fine black oak staircase leads to the upper storeys of the house, the brightness and smoothness of which must have put to the test the hilarious guests of the first Mr. Thornhill, an eminent banker and goldsmith of Charles II.'s reign; and which, to say truth, occasionally at the present time, tested the stability of less-practised topers, when, bougie in hand, they essayed to gain their chambers after Geoffrey Thornhill's more refined but not less liberal hospitality. Amidst the tattered banners and the rusted spears and swords of more exciting periods were scattered the more peaceful trophies of mimic war: stags' heads, boars' tusks, foxes' masks and brushes, hunting-whips of every age since the days of the Merry Monarch, and fishing apparatus from the time of Izaak Walton to the most approved methods of modern invention, adorned the walls in rich profusion. Here was a picture of old Tregonwell Frampton and Diomed; there was Colonel O'Kelly and Eclipse; John Ward and his hounds occupied

a niche on one side of the finely-carved oaken chimney-piece, Colonel Jolliffe and the Old Surrey on the other; whilst between the two, and above the fireplace, was a fine full-length picture of the grandfather of the present proprietor of the place, in hunting costume, who had set the example of keeping the county hounds without a subscription, an example which had been duly followed by both his successors. It was, indeed, pretty clear that the habits of the knightly family which had held the property till loyalty and claret beggared its descendant in the Civil Wars, had been only exchanged for amusements more befitting the age in which we live. I can say nothing about the respectable money-lender, who took the place for a bad debt, and called the lands after his own name: he probably had but little knowledge of country pursuits, and was more at home in Lombard Street than on his estate of Thornhills; but there can be no doubt that a taste had come down through the days of hawking and harriers, until the name of Thornhill of Thornhills included the very quintessence of a country life.

In a mixed aristocracy, like that of England,

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such a family as the Thornhills was certain to hold its own. High connections, an unencumbered estate of about twelve thousand a year, and a character for a certain amount of talent, derived chiefly from diplomacy in minor courts, and the representation of the county on high Conservative principles, made them respected by the highest rank and looked up to by men of almost every position. It must, however, be admitted that they shone rather amongst the provincial aristocracy than in that heterogeneous mass of beings called London society. The father of Geoffrey Thornhill, though he had refused a baronetcy and married a peer's daughter, had lived almost entirely amongst his tenantry, until the end of the London season invariably filled his house with overworked politicians, overfed loungers, sportsmen, and idlers of every degree. Then Thornhills became the house of the county. No duke rivalled the profusion of its hospitality: and Lady Charlotte, in the newest and largest of white kid gloves, amidst her china monsters and antique plate, received men and women of every shade of politics and every colour of religion. Her charity was of the most

expansive; and I am sorry to say that she busied herself no more with the tittle-tattle of high life, and the irregularities of the fashionable *roués* who surrounded her throne, than about the infidelities of the matrons of imperial Rome. She was a most charming person; was still handsome; but had retired from London life upon the birth of her son Geoffrey; and had taken thenceforth as much interest in her own village of Silverstone and its half-dozen rheumatic inhabitants, as her husband had in county business and the Middleshire fox-hounds.

But Lady Charlotte grew old and her husband grew old: and as will happen in the nature of things, the property, the china monsters, and the hounds descended to Geoffrey Thornhill. Everybody worshipped him, as in duty bound. The men ate with him, drank with him, shot with him, and hunted with him; and the women pulled caps for him. He was the delight of all hearts, as who should not have been, who was the handsomest and one of the richest men in the county? He had his faults: a little hastiness of temper, and a turn for dissipation; but he was full of generous impulses, and never could say

"No" to himself or to other people. When Emily Carisbrooke, the eldest daughter of Sir George Carisbrooke, and one of the prettiest girls in the country, married him, she was looked upon by her acquaintance as the most fortunate of women. "Such a handsome man!" said Mary Truman; "And so amusing!" said Caroline Ashley; "I sat next to him at dinner once at Lord Bray's, and he sent me into fits of laughter about the Keatings' water party, when Lady Singleton's wig fell off in the lock, and was carried down the stream. It was fished out at last, and she was obliged to put it on again; but she has had a cold in the head ever since." "I am afraid he's fond of play, dear," said her mother, who had made a violent but unsuccessful effort herself in Caroline's behalf, and comforted herself with the notion of his irregularities. And it was true: his mother, Lady Charlotte, always said of him—though mothers are apt to be partial—he had but two faults: "he loves play, and always manages to fall in love with the wrong woman." Lady Charlotte's idea of the wrong woman was somebody she did not like for a daughter-in-law; Mrs. Geoffrey Thornhill her-

self had other notions upon the subject, and not of so cheerful a character. I knew Geoffrey Thornhill somewhat intimately, certainly better than his father or mother knew him, or than he knew himself; and shall scarcely discharge my duty to my reader unless I give an honest description of the fine fellow, who had fallen a victim to assassination. In person he was tall and handsome: his features were especially good, perhaps better than the expression of his face, which announced sensuality, and weakness of purpose: he was graceful, and well made, as quite a young man; indulgence gave a fulness to his figure in after years which was only kept in check by violent exercise on horseback and on foot. He had a peculiarly pleasant smile, which played about his mouth; and as he passed a life almost free from anxieties, and amidst the gratification of almost every wish, it is scarcely to be wondered at that it was ever present. He was by far pleasanter in society than out of it; not an uncommon thing: and there are thousands who acquire a reputation for temper in the world, quite unmerited when judged by home life. He was a selfish man; and rather thoughtless of

little kindnesses which cost some sacrifice, but lavish in all things that cost him none. Having never felt the want of money, he was liberal and openhanded, without being truly generous or charitable; for he made no inquisition into the objects of his bounty, nor the results of his gifts. To his wife he was never unkind; but he frequently pained her by open admiration of other women, and by attentions which had not escaped the observation of the world in which they lived. He was an excellent friend. As far as a mount, a day's shooting, or a hundred pounds could be of service to an acquaintance, Geoffrey Thornhill was not wanting; but he would have foregone no pleasure for the sake of any one; and regarded a death in his circle only as so far painful as it deprived him of an anticipated enjoyment. Without being a talented man, he had much quickness and cleverness, and a happy facility of expression which approached eloquence at a county meeting, where he never spoke excepting on subjects with which he fully identified himself. He was thoroughly impulsive; but having been generally successful, he had never been repressed or repulsed, so as to become morose. He had the

making of a good member of society; but having no settled principle, he was deficient in all that would have made it available in the day of trial. He was affectionate in disposition; fond of his boys, and proud of them; but careless of their real good. His greatest favourite was his only brother, a London banker, and of tastes, habits, and disposition the complete reverse of himself. This attachment was mutual, and the feeling is not very extraordinary. Each saw in the character of the other some want of his own; the hardworking, thick-crusted man of business, who had a mind intent upon nothing but money, who spent from 10 A.M. till 4 P.M. every day of his life in a counting-house, receiving and paying, and conning the aspect of continental politics, admired the unembarrassed *nonchalance* and careless generosity of the other; whilst Geoffrey could not but admire in his brother Henry that perseverance, steadiness, and strict principle in which he felt himself to be deficient. Be that as it may, the most amiable trait in the character of either brother was fraternal love.

But little remains to be told of Geoffrey Thornhill. He was an adept at all sports and

athletic exercises. From his cradle he had been brought up amongst horses and guns; and education completed what nature seemed to have begun, by making him the most finished sportsman of his day. His feats and skill live in the recollection of his acquaintances, and are still quoted as unrivalled even in our own times. He could hunt his own hounds, if need be, after a night of hazard or whist. He knew as much of his covers and his fields as the keepers themselves, and was equally conversant with the favourite haunts of the birds. He was as willing to encounter danger against the poachers by whom his neighbourhood was infested, as those who were paid for the occupation. Constant excitement seemed necessary to his very existence. His almost universal mode of travelling was by relays of hacks, and he performed the most astonishing distances in the shortest possible space of time. Need I say that such things as these made him the most popular of men? and if his own sex of his own rank regarded him with some envy, he was dear to the women and the poor as the apple of their eye. What rendered the whole so charming was the most

perfect absence of all affectation, and the unconscious ease with which he distanced all competitors in the race. Where could he have found an enemy ?

CHAPTER V.

AN ENGLISH GENTLEMAN'S CASTLE.

"Hæc res et jungit, junctos et servat amicos."

"How do you go to Bidborough, Thornhill?" said an *habitué* of Brookes's, as Geoffrey Thornhill lounged into the bay window about 11 A.M. on a lovely morning in May, with "The Times" in one hand and a straight riding-whip in the other, having left his hack at the door in charge of a red-waistcoated man, well known at the Corner. "I ride to Marston's to dinner to-day; it is only twenty-seven miles, and I have sent on a hack half way; he rides on with me to the course to-morrow morning. What are they doing about the gray?"

"What, Benevenuto, for The Gentlemen's Stakes? Oh! they back him at evens; there are only four to start; and he is quite safe to win, unless he dies in the night. Do you know anything about him?"

"Yes; they had a trial yesterday, and he is said to be seven pounds better than Maid of the Mill; so that there can be no mistake. I've just backed him for another thousand."

"Who rides him?"

"Kildonald. Between ourselves that's the most awkward part of the business; but Marston thinks himself under some sort of obligation to the man, and he makes a great point of having the mount. As it was offered to him long ago, I can hardly see how he can help himself now. I don't like Kildonald."

"Perhaps you're prejudiced, and dislike his countrymen in general."

"On the contrary, I have a particular fancy for Irishmen; that is, of the worst and highest classes; the former are not understood, and the latter have not always fair play. Their faults are almost invariably such as lean towards excellences, or arise from impulse; and they are finished gentlemen."

"Kildonald scarcely comes up to that standard; and how the deuce he manages to live as he does I have no idea. He has the most elastic conscience about women and horseflesh I ever knew."

"Don't let him hear you say so, Carteret," said Geoffrey, laughing; "he has had no affair on his hands so long that he thinks of returning to Ireland to look for some gentleman to oblige him. You know that Michael Johnson only saved his life by declining to fight until Kildonald had paid him, as he couldn't wind up his accounts satisfactorily without; and Michael didn't think it right to leave the world without doing so."

"You heard what he said about poor Dennis Browne? It seems that two men were disputing on the Curragh as to his death, whether it took place in England or India, with his regiment. Having some slight acquaintance with Kildonald they appealed to him. 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'you could not have referred to a person more capable of deciding your wager. It is drawn. I shot him myself in Ireland after the Kildare election in 18—.'"

"Cold-blooded brute!" said Thornhill, as he nodded an adieu to his friend and mounted his hack to ride his first stage towards Bidborough.

Nothing perhaps is so uninteresting as local description. A feature may be declaratory of

character; an eye is so, a mouth and chin peculiarly so; and even a nose may be characteristic of feeling or temper. But what is to be said for a straight street or a crooked one; irregularity of building or the reverse; a church with a tower or a steeple; and whether the mayor lives in a red house or a white one? Nothing whatever, absolutely nothing; and the honest novelist, who is not making a book, but writing a story, is completely nonplussed. Yet must I say a word for Bidborough. It had a singular pre-eminence. It was and is the very stupidest country town in England. During eleven months and eight-and-twenty days of every year it enjoyed a tranquillity perfectly marvellous. Yet it was not without inhabitants. Of course it had a parson. It was a fine large living, some 1,500*l.* a-year, and usually reserved for the second son of the "great family," as the Earl of Bidborough was called. I never see a very mouldy-looking place, where there appears to be little or nothing to do, without finding that the emolument for doing it is more than sufficient. There was a lawyer; but I apprehend that the greater part of his business consisted of the agency to the "great

family," and a few others, who trusted him with the collection of rents and the drawing of leases. Like all other robberies, those can be most effectively perpetrated in the dark. There was also an apothecary; he would have done well, but for the adoption of hydropathy; which, we presume by its tenuity, had penetrated to these remote and mysterious regions. The place itself consists of a long ill-paved street, ignorant of trottoir, in the midst of a down county. It has a mouldy smell and grass-grown appearance. It is itself purely agricultural in its population, though situated in the middle of one of our cloth manufacturing districts. But for the conversation at Brookes's, the reader would be puzzled to know what attraction could have taken Geoffrey Thornhill to such a spot.

The fact is, that though Bidborough itself was unknown, its race-course had an universal reputation. It was more or less a private meeting; the tumult and turmoil of a great race-course were wanting; and a considerable number of the races was devoted to gentlemen riders. This in itself, independently of other circumstances, made it more select, and, consequently, a more agreeable

rendezvous than usual. Professional service was at a discount.

The present season was expected to be remarkably good. The great house was full, and the neighbouring gentry had determined upon a revival of the former days of splendour. Of late years it had been upon the wane; but there was a general feeling, a tacit understanding, amongst racing men that Bidborough was to be the fashion.

I speak with all due deference of fashion; her power is too great and too universal to be gainsaid. She makes a hero, or spoils a reputation, in the same breath. She encourages a Blondin, a Leotard, and a Spurgeon, or damns a mountebank of similar pretensions, for no better cause. One season she takes white soup, another brown; this year strict morality in a loose coat and crinoline; next year laxity of morals and rigidity of costume will be in vogue.

The gentlemen of England had determined that Bidborough races should be more attractive than ever; and the great point of attraction was to be "The Corinthian Stakes," a handicap race for gentlemen riders alone. Of starters there

would be but four; but the money which was on the favourite, a fine three-year old, the property of Sir Frederick Marston, called Benevenuto, gave some idea of the opinion in which he was held by the great patrons of the turf.

The ride from London to Sir Frederick Marston's was sufficiently interesting. In a legitimate three-volumed novel I think the writer would have been justified in devoting a page or two to the memory of Byron, as the horseman passes within sight of Harrow, or in culling the flowers of English history for the benefit of his readers as he neared St. Albans. I say, peace to the great Earl of Warwick and the heroes who fell in the wars of York and Lancaster. Besides, I must identify myself with my *dramatis personæ*,—and I feel convinced that nothing was further from the thoughts of Geoffrey Thornhill than the wars of the Roses. At the latter town he mounted his second hack, and was not long in reaching the seat of Sir Frederick, where he was welcomed with as much cordiality as is consistent with true good breeding. Geoffrey was a favourite everywhere; and Lady Marston was no exception to so general a rule.

Sir Frederick and Lady Marston were still young: that is, comparatively with Thornhill. He had been one of the young men whom the latter had loved to have about him: a good shot, a horseman, a *bon vivant*, and a congenial spirit in many ways. Ten years in point of age, when a man first appears, make a vast difference, and establish an influence which not unfrequently lasts through life. Marston had more to thank Thornhill for than he ever understood. A long minority and a taste for dissipation made him the object of attack to every well-born sharper; and it was well for him that he found a home where he might indulge his tastes to a certain extent, without falling into the hands of those who would have been merciless in the face of such temptation. He was reserved for better things. At thirty he married a woman every way suited to him, whose charms of conversation and manner made his home cheerful, and whose beauty of person accorded well with the hospitalities dispensed by one of the richest country gentlemen in England. He had a pack of fox-hounds in a country only second to Leicestershire and Northamptonshire; a gallery of pictures

on which care, knowledge, and money had been lavished; a deer forest in Scotland; a villa at Como; and yet he was dissatisfied with his lot. Fortune had denied him two things. He had been married five years without a child, and he had kept a string of horses for seven, but had never won a great race. For the former disappointment there was no accounting, and there at present seemed to be no remedy: for the latter no expense or trouble should be spared.

What were the awful mysteries of a former and less-civilized age, which drove woman from the table of her lord as soon as she had satisfied the cravings of nature, whilst he and his comrades were left to indulge in a prolonged repast? Was it that the male became then more stupid, or more savage, than usual? or that some terrible orgies remained to be enacted at which the mistress had no more right to be present than Alcibiades at the Eleusinian mysteries, or Clodius at those of the Bona Dea? Be that as it may, the custom has obtained in this country, and at the time I write of was remarkably popular. Our ancients drank gloriously. Pitt, Fox, and Sheridan have no rivals in these dege-

nerate days: and their eloquence was as strong and as full flavoured as their claret. Women could but have silently looked on, and in horror: and their conversation was of politics and of war —fit subjects for such merry meetings. They had discarded the female Marlboroughs and Mashams from their deliberations, and laid plans for controlling other people when unable to control themselves.

In France society was differently constituted. Women relinquished not the right to preside over the after-dinner conversation of their husbands, and the mistresses of kings and councillors became mistresses of the world. The Pompadours and Du Barrys had the best of it, and their influence was all-powerful in the petty intrigues which sprang well from thin and unfrequent potations. A great man was your two-bottle toper; a still greater was he who carried off four quart measures of a well-cooked vintage; and great must have been the oratory that flowed from those rubicund lips. It is a treat now but seldom enjoyed to hear a speech the effect of one truth-compelling bottle: the rough and racy outpourings of anything beyond

it we look for in vain. There were giants in those days.

The reader must not imagine that either Marston or his guest attempted to rival the performances of a bygone age. They were sober and decorous gentlemen, as the world goes, and in wine especially. Gastronomy is the fashion of the day, but drunkenness is not. Still with no less certainty did Lady Marston and her guests rise at the usual time, and amidst a rustling of silks and satins, and the profound salutations of one devoted slave of the door, retire to the drawing-room. Sir Frederick and Thornhill drew their chairs closer together; the butler appeared with one fresh and cool bottle of choice Lafitte, and they proceeded to discuss questions in which, as the reader may feel an interest, he shall be allowed to participate.

"And how are the boys, Thornhill?"

"Well; and at school. Tom is at Eton, and Charlie is to join him. I hope it may be for his good."

"Ah! my friend Charlie must be getting a big fellow now. I like that boy, Geoffrey there's something very original about him."

"Originality has its drawbacks, Marston: and if your young favourite was less original and more fond of work it might be better for him. However, Eton will do that for him, perhaps."

"It must be singularly changed since my day if it does," said Sir Frederick. "If I were bent upon giving a naturally indolent boy full opportunity for indulging his favourite weakness, I should certainly select a public school for him."

"Why so?"

"Because, although there is plenty of discipline for the disposition, there is none for the mind; and the distinction is very marked. A cub or an ass may be licked into shape; a stupid fellow may be brightened; an impudent fellow may be taken down; but there's no cure for idleness in a public school: and it's almost the only fault that could not be cured there. How does Tom get on?"

"Admirably. He's a great favourite, comes home surrounded by chums, who all admire and copy him, and has never missed his remove. However, he's plenty of brains. Charlie's my

bête noire, and seems proud of his nickname, The Dunce of the Family."

"I wish he were a poor man's son. I prognosticate great things for Charlie," said Marston, good-naturedly. "Tom can take care of himself; but younger sons are not always so well taken care of. I suppose he must have a profession."

"It's early days to think of that. I believe he'll have his uncle's property; for, between ourselves, Fred, I've nothing to leave him. Every shilling of Thornhills is entailed, and the Irish property too; besides which the latter is saddled with my wife's settlement, and is scarcely able to bear the burden."

"Your life's not insured?"

"Not for a halfpenny."

"What a thoughtless fellow you are, Thornhill! I ought to have been your Mentor, not you mine."

"When I first knew you, you were as little of a Telemachus as I of a Mentor: times have improved with you. But you haven't told me what to do with Charlie; he's nearly fourteen, so I must make up my mind soon."

"Send him to Henry Reynolds."

"What! the rector? My dear fellow, he knows Charlie too well, and me too."

"You don't know him, if you imagine his love for you or Charlie would ever interfere with his duties."

"You think so, Marston? You ought to know; but I own it did not strike me."

"He's the truest-hearted gentleman in this county: and no man doubts his learning. His living is but small, and his family large: so that you may benefit him and yourself too."

"I must have another chat with you about Reynolds. The boy is idle, fond of horses and dogs, with a strong will, good manners and appearance, and would make his way at Eton."

"The worst thing that could happen to him. He would never learn a lesson, or write a piece of Latin, or do a copy of verses for himself. As to his horses and dogs, he's a Thornhill, I presume; nothing more. Cramwell tells me that the duke finds the present system very defective in orthography and every useful information, and determines on instituting an army examination. This is only the thin end of the

wedge; that examination must soon become competitive; and the end will be open government appointments, civil and military. Old Cramwell is delighted at the prospect. At first he shook his head, talked about tone and the official interest, but soon gave way; for my Lord Cramwell discovered some consolation in the very pretty pickings to be got for his party by an increased staff of principalships, inspectorships, commissionerships, and a number of other ships, which the old duke good-humouredly, with an eye to his own profession, called 'ships of the line.'"

"Then," said Thornhill, "they may get more learning into the army, but they will lose caste. If the modern system is to be forced upon us, what is to become of Eton and Harrow and half the good schools in England?"

"They'll soften down, Thornhill, to meet the times; and a boy may write French without being chicken-hearted, and understand arithmetic without being a writing-master or national schoolboy: because that is about the reality of our present feeling on the subject. I learnt nothing at Eton, and I don't suppose Charlie

would learn much more. You can teach him to be a gentleman, and that's about the use of Harrow or Eton to two-thirds that go there. It happens to be just the knowledge that your boy doesn't want. And now let's go to the drawing-room, as you will take no more. Emily will be expecting us by this time. Thompson, have a fire lighted in the smoking-room in half an hour's time."

CHAPTER VI.

"AND ITS INMATES."

"A wife well-humour'd, dutiful, and chaste."

You see in all novels, or romances, or stories of any kind, a certain amount of paper devoted to "bosh." I mean staid and well-digested reflections, or dissertations, on literature, politics, ecclesiastical architecture, education, Puseyism, morals, or love. Whenever I come across such heavy reading in light literature I make a point of skipping it. I have occasionally found a difficulty in ascertaining exactly how much to skip without losing the point of the story: and this has delayed me. To prevent my reader from suffering any such inconvenience, I intend to devote the beginning of my chapters to any such serious and unprofitable labour, when I find it absolutely necessary either for the respectability of my book, or for the amount of matter which custom requires. There must be in books, as in

men, a certain ponderosity to give them character; and an author may no more venture in these days of universal paste and scissors, to write a series of ups and downs, and ins and outs, of heroes and heroines, without considerable ethical deviations; or to make two or three persons talk in the simple and rational manner in which most ladies and gentlemen do talk, without some ambitious interpolations, than he would venture to exhibit a stout gentleman in top boots on a bay cob, riding quietly round the circle at Astley's, or a bricklayer carrying his hod and mortar up a ladder at the Alhambra, instead of the tights and spangles of Blondin and Leotard, or the velvet habit and bejewelled housings of Caroline and her charger. Anybody, says Longinus the Younger, can write a book if he describe men and women as they are. Yes, and what a book it would be! Thank heaven, we none of us know each other as we are. No man alive could describe us as we are. He would avert his face from his own picture and blush to find himself no better than his worst creation. The fact is, men and women are very much alike in this world: the wicked

are seldom as bad as they are represented, and the best have a leaven which has escaped observation in the lump. We are actuated by the same sort of passions as our fellow-men. Circumstances change the direction of our actions and their results: education and self-government the intensity of our motives. Another thing we are blind to is the consequences of our conduct; and the greatest malefactor may have the least to answer for. That is a comfortable reflection for the black sheep, and may teach the golden-fleeced ones a little charity.

Both Marston and Thornhill were men of the world, and they were neither of them stupid men. According to generally-received opinion, they were well-educated men. The former had had the advantages, for which he seemed scarcely grateful, of Eton and the Continent, the latter of Eton and Oxford. Both had been to these men a mere fashionable course of training, not supposed to be practically useful, nor, indeed, as having any definite result. Yet unconsciously the character of both had been affected to a certain extent by their early life. The absence of the practical rendered either incapable of fully

comprehending the subject on which they were engaged at the conclusion of the last chapter; but the effect of their education it was which plunged them into a discussion with which neither of them was fitted to cope. Marston was disappointed with Eton, because it gave him few advantages in the career he afterwards adopted. He was not an inelegant scholar, though not a deep one; and Cambridge or Oxford might have found him not deficient in university requirements, and given him a position independently of his social rank. On the Continent he could not be nobody; a man of large fortune and rank never is: but he was less than nobody in society, and he felt acutely how much he lost by the exclusiveness of his knowledge. He had now acquired a certain refinement and sympathy with modern tastes, which increased his aversion to what he considered a mistaken system; and he saw very little good in public education beyond its discipline, which affected neither himself nor Thornhill. Geoffrey, on the other hand, was a clever boy; had gone through the school with credit to himself; did not know that he would probably have been much what he was, wherever

he had been, and attributed all the good in his character to Eton, and all the bad to the world and its temptations. He scarcely knew that one duty of school would have been to teach him to withstand them.

The hospitalities of Woodlands Abbey were charming. The master, we have seen, could be agreeable; nay, more, he could be, and was with his intimates, a very fascinating person: but Lady Marston far outshone her husband in her character of hostess. To say she was one of the most beautiful women of her day was to say the least in her praise. Her mind was cultivated to an extent scarcely conceivable in days when ornament takes the place of substantial merit. Her manners had a charm which pertain only to such as have embellished English sincerity with the elegances of the best foreign society. She was kind, but graceful; even warm, but courteous; a woman of the world in the midst of home duties; thoughtful and tender, but not the less witty and conversational. She received Geoffrey Thornhill kindly, inquired enthusiastically after his wife and his boys, of whom she knew him to be prouder than of anything;

regretted the absence of other company, but congratulated herself and Marston upon their accidental presence in the country at this time, when they could be of service to so old a friend. "But we shall see you back after the races, and then perhaps you will give us a day or two more, as we do not leave till the end of the week." She took her leave and her candle together, and the men were left to their devices.

If there be anything in the proverb "In vino veritas," it is not badly capped by "Ex fumo dare lucem." From behind a cigar we get the silver lining of the cloud. We say our best things, and keep the real conversation of the day for that cheerful hour when ordinary mortals have retired to rest. A smoking-room is an essential in a gentleman's house; and Marston's was not behind others in its comforts. The barbarism that invites a man into the open air of an evening, to the chill and fog of an English climate in the month of May, to enjoy his post-prandial tobacco, is deserving of severe reprobation or silent contempt; and both Sir Frederick and his guest, though far behind the present fumiferous age, were too conversant with ordi-

nary comforts to deny themselves the luxury of arm-chairs and a fire, in a room embellished by the coaches of Henderson, and favourite horses and hounds by Ward, Fernelly, Davis, and all the best sporting artists of the day.

It scarcely required these to remind our two friends of the importance of to-morrow. It had been the subject uppermost in their minds for some part of the day; and though Marston was too well accustomed to winning or losing a race, and Geoffrey Thornhill too careless of a few hundreds, more or less, to let his present book tinge his general tone with one shade of anxiety, still they had both quite enough at stake to be glad to talk over the probable chances of success.

Thornhill puffed a few clouds of smoke before him, and from behind them inquired after the gray.

"All right," said Marston, "he never looked better; shall we have in Turner?"

"No! never mind about Turner, Fred; let us know about the trial. Are you satisfied it was all right yourself? for though I believe Turner to be as honest as the day, those fellows have temptations which we know nothing about."

"I took every precaution; it is my opinion that the horse can't lose—and that he will win the Leger if he keeps his form. He is better than he ever was before, certainly a stone better than when he won at Northampton."

"I'm glad to hear it. If I'd seen you yesterday I should have backed him for the double event. We'll go in good time to-morrow, and see what Musgrave will do about The Leger. Burke, that Irish fellow, was at Tattersall's, and wanted to lay against him for The Corinthian; though I hear he's taken all he can get about him for Doncaster some time ago. Are these the cigars you imported for yourself the year before last?"

"No! Pontet got them for Lord Peterborough, and bought them back at his sale, with quantities of all kinds of snuff. Deuce of a fellow for snuff was old Peterborough! He bought half George IV.'s lot at the Carlton House sale, because it put him in mind of the days of the Regency."

Here they both relapsed into silence: it was quite clear that there was nothing very interesting in the topic they had accidentally hit

upon. It required no great effort to get back to the old one, however: for after about a couple of minutes, Geoffrey asked who was to ride Marston's horse.

"The very best gentleman rider in England!" said Sir Frederick, with enthusiasm, as if his friend Thornhill must be satisfied now. "The very best in England, bar none."

"You mean Kildonald; I quite agree with you. There is no one out like him: and as to the young ones, they are no use with him whatever. He has the finest hands, and he combines monstrous power with great elegance. He can do anything with his horse; in fact, he knows too much."

"You don't like him, Geoffrey."

"I don't like his party. He's a pleasant, gentlemanly fellow enough; but that fellow Burke is in every robbery, and I think Kildonald is in with him."

"They are compatriots; but there can't be much in common between such men as Burke and Kildonald," said Marston, with what truth the reader has some notion. But the baronet was perhaps the least suspicious of men. When

on town he always kept at least one pocket open for every man's hand to be in it; and since his residence abroad, and his marriage, he scarcely believed in the existence of premeditated rascality. At this moment came a knock at the door, and a servant entered, slowly and noiselessly, as is the wont of gentlemen's servants. "What horse is to go on to-morrow to Sittingdean for Mr. Thornhill, sir? Turner is gone on with Benevenuto, and left no orders."

"Send the roan mare and my black hack. We shall start from here at ten, and tell George to be ready at Sittingdean at half-past eleven. What sort of a night is it?"

"Rains fast, Sir Frederick." And the man left the room.

"So much the better for the gray; it can't be too heavy for him; every drop that falls will be ounces in his favour: it's a certainty if he lives till the morning." And the sanguine baronet indulged in a prolonged yawn, which reminded both that they might retire for the night.

"Good night, Marston; breakfast at nine. And you think it is a certainty?" said Thornhill for the last time.

"As certain as a thing can be. Good night!" And they both took their candles and their separate ways to bed.

The evening was cold and very cheerless outside: inside, the bright fire, heavy curtains, and tapestry, the comfortable invalid chair, and wax-lights, left nothing to be desired but sleep. But sleep would not come; and when Thornhill's servant was dismissed, his master sat down opposite the fire, and remained lost in thought. Thornhill, though not a low-spirited man, nor a superstitious one, was very different from what the world gave him credit for being. It saw only the bright side of his character. Solitude could hardly be said to exhibit, but it brought out, the darker shades. He was too sensible not to know his faults, and too honest not to admit them; but he was too weak to resist them. This produced a train of thought which usually made him sadder without making him better. To-night he was peculiarly low-spirited. Every sound irritated him: even the shutting of the doors at the end of his corridor made him wince. Then he thought of his boys; what he might and would do for them. And a provision for

Charlie, and his conversation with Marston, flashed across his mind. Then he thought of his wife: he thought of her as Emily Carisbrooke, and again as Emily Thornhill; and he wondered whether he had quite done his duty by her; whether he might not have saved her many a heartache. Thornhill was not a coward, nor a hypocrite. I think in these moments he took a just view of his position. He never blinked a question; but it seldom resulted in permanent good. But there were few who had been so spoiled by fortune and by flattery, who would have been equally honest or more consistent.

CHAPTER VII.

TO THE COURSE.

"The rugged mountain's scanty cloak
Was dwarfish shrubs of birch and oak."

The rain was over, and by nine o'clock it was as fine a May morning as ever shone upon the earth. The sun was high in heaven, and the still wet blades of grass and early hedgerow leaves were glistening like diamonds. There was a genial warmth about the day already, early as it was, which made it rather the harbinger of the coming summer than the expiring effort of a departing spring. All nature rejoiced; the birds carolled blithely, as they sprang from bough to bough, or flirted merrily in the tender shadows of the opening leaves. The feeling was irresistible; and Thornhill had but little difficulty in shaking off the blue devils of the night before when he threw up his window and welcomed the morning air. Lady Marston was already at the

breakfast-table, an English woman's happiest moment, with one or two inmates of her house, whom we have not before noticed, her brother Lindsay, and a young Belgravian, scarcely of presentable age. Marston himself, too, was on the steps of his house, giving some orders about the horses, and returned to the breakfast-room just as Geoffrey Thornhill entered by an opposite door.

Breakfast is a cheerful meal in a country gentleman's house; perhaps the most so of any. Luncheon is a scramble, a sort of voluntary, at which the sportsmen of a family never appear. Dinner, to be good and agreeable, must be attended with a certain amount of pomposity; and this climate is altogether too cold by seven or eight o'clock p.m. for lightness and elegance, unaccompanied by a genial warmth of magnificence and state. An English gentleman is without a rival in evening dress; but it is the only time when an English woman may appear to throw away a chance. She will always, in point of beauty, distance foreign competition; but candlelight gives an opening to artificial adornment, which brings a clever and unscru-

pulous rival near her level. Nothing has a ghost of a chance with a well-dressed English woman at a breakfast-table. And its charm of propriety and ease; its combination of order and sociability; even its newspaper gossip and epistolary comments, place it at the head of domestic enjoyments. It is to the day what youth is to life: somewhat too short, but a season of promise. Alas! not always to be fulfilled.

Time is no laggard when a cheerful day's sport is before such men as Sir Frederick Marston and Geoffrey Thornhill. In half an hour they were ready for their proposed journey; and the roan mare and the black hack having been gone some hours earlier, they prepared for an exhilarating ride through a beautiful country to Sittingdean, a village within a short distance of the course, and where their second horses awaited their arrival.

"Shall we say half an hour later for dinner, Mr. Thornhill?" said Lady Marston. "Perhaps eight o'clock will suit you and Frederick better than our usual hour down here?" insinuating gracefully that she was in the habit of making a sacrifice at the shrine of Fashion in

her country house capacity. "If you are home a little earlier than you expect, you can play a game at billiards before dinner. We always do when anybody is here to play."

"Thank ye, Kate. Eight o'clock will do capitally for us," said the baronet, kissing his hand to his pretty wife and the young lady who accompanied her to the steps of the portico. "Adieu! I wish you luck," was the rejoinder. And the gentlemen were gone.

About the same time, but on the opposite side of the country, might have been seen a party of a very different kind verging towards the course. Over a long strip of common land, decked here and there with dells, and clumps of stunted box, and straggling gorse, rumbled one of those half-houses, half-waggons, drawn by a dull, badly-fed cart-horse and a thriving donkey, the common attendant on a gipsy encampment. It was accompanied by some half-dozen swarthy-looking Bohemians, two of whom were women, whose scarlet neckerchiefs and fantastic head-dresses proclaimed their profession. A short distance behind these came three more, apparently belonging to the former. As far as temporary

association it was so, but they had either no permanent interest in the doings of the gang, or their present conversation was meant for no ears but their own. The group was a singular one. It consisted of a man, whose sharp features, high cheek-bones, and twinkling gray eyes had no characteristic of gipsy life: his face was indicative of low cunning; and his dress consisted of corduroy breeches, unbuttoned at the knee, and a blue dress-coat with metal buttons and large pockets protected by heavy lappels on the outside. His companions were a woman of about forty years of age, bearing the remains of much beauty, disfigured by intemperance of every kind, and now haggard and worn by sickness and premature decay; and a youth of about twenty, singularly athletic, finely made, and with a face which, in the midst of all its grandeur, exhibited a ferocity more like that of uncivilised life than the ordinary daring of depraved nature. There was a recklessness about him as of one smarting under wrong, and inimical to his race, which showed with wonderful contrast against the cunning, lurcher-like look of his companion.

"And where are we now?" said he, in an

impatient tone. "Near the course?" And he halted to survey the scene.

"That's Sittingdean to your left, and that's the race-course to the right, where ye see the tents in the hollow; this bridle-path is the way to Stapleford over the common: but ye know the way." And here Mike Daly (for so was he called) turned with a malicious half-look towards the woman.

"Ay, ay! I know every stone and every tree of the road: it's burnt into my very soul with a scar that twenty years have never healed. What do you ask such a question for?" and her face turned almost livid as she placed her hand on her side, and her eyes flashed with an unwonted light.

"I've had my wrongs too," said Mike, "av it's not in this counthry. Faix, a home's a home, if it is but a pigstye, and——"

"Your wrongs, indeed!" said the woman, with a look of withering contempt at the speaker. "What do you call wrongs? Have you seen your home, as you call it, destroyed; your only parent dying with a curse on his lips for your unborn child; your hopes of happiness withered;

your love trampled on; your very supplications for bread derided by one for whom you had sacrificed everything in this world and in the world to come?" and such was the vehemence with which the words were uttered, that Daly, accustomed as he was to such outbreaks, dropped behind, abashed at the insignificance of his own misfortunes.

"Silence, mother!" said the younger man; "think of this world, and leave the other to take care of itself. What has it ever done for us, that we should concern ourselves about it?" And with a daring fierceness he strode onward at a pace that bid fair to distance his companions.

"Ah! like father, like son," continued the Irishman, in a sort of soliloquy. "He drove us from our homes, to get the rint; and now——. But wait a while, wait a while; it's lawyer Burke that'll see the poor man righted." And at this moment a turn in the narrow path they had been following brought them round the corner of a small covert, whence the race-course came full upon their view.

The younger man had outstripped the other two, and was now mingling with the gipsies, who

regarded him with looks of distrust. He was poorly clad, and nothing but his manner of expressing himself, and a certain air of hauteur, served to separate him from the lowest grade of ruffianism. He was no sooner joined by his mother and Mike Daly than the three plunged at once into the crowd, now beginning to collect from every side. They had almost reached the course, when, in crossing one of the rides, cut in every direction through the heath, a horseman, on a small active horse, brushed rudely past, almost trampling upon the young man in his career. His left hand seized the bridle, and he raised his stick with the other, about to inflict a punishment, which might have been severe, from the formidable nature of the weapon, when a harsh cry from his mother arrested his arm, and permitted the horseman to pursue his course unmolested.

"George! George! for God's sake hold; leave him, leave him to—to—to Heaven. Yes, yes, there is, there is a God. I was taught so once; and He only deserted me when I deserted myself. His punishment will come soon enough;" and the broken sobs of the woman were for some

moments too violent for suppression. The man stood with one hand grasping his mother's arm, whilst his head was turned in the direction of his retreating foe. Every evil passion seemed gleaming from his eye, and his face, eminently handsome as it was, had the beauty of Moloch.

"Look at him; look, George. Shall you forget him?"

"Do I ever forget an enemy?"

"Is he an enemy?" And she asked the question with a vacant look of almost insanity.

"He would have trodden us under foot, like the rest of his accursed race; d—— him. Who or what is he, that I am not as good?"

"He is Arthur Kildonald: my enemy, but your father."

A sullen scowl crossed his face; and his mother, rising at the same moment from a hillock on which she had sunk, he took her by the hand, and led her towards the railing which separated the stand from the course. "My father!—Arthur Kildonald! No; I'll not forget him. Let us be going."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RACE.

"Puncto mobilis horæ
"Nunc prece, nunc pretio, nunc vi, nunc morte, supremâ,
Permutet dominos et cedat in altera jura."—Hor., *Ep.* ii.

The bell had already twice rung for saddling: and the two races had been run rather to the disappointment of the gentlemen and the success of the professional bookmakers. In the first race an outsider had won by the jockeyship, as was asserted, of Kildonald; in the second the favourite had been defeated on the post by a beaten horse, and the race pulled out of the fire. In the interval between speculation on the coming event, The Corinthian Handicap, the race of the day, the conversation turned partly on the merits of the horses, partly on that of the riders. So public a character as a gentleman rider courts criticism, and generally has his share of it.

"Captain Kildonald made a fine race of that,

Sir Frederick," said a neat-looking, well-whiskered individual, with a small betting-book in his hand, and a toothpick in his mouth. "He never took a liberty with his 'oss, and they all come back to him at last. He's a nasty beggar to ride, for he wants you to get all you can out of him, and you mustn't get it out too fast."

"He rode the horse very well, very well indeed, Smithson," replied the baronet: "few men can ride better. There's many a jockey might give *him* 5 lb.; but he scarcely looks himself to-day, somehow or other."

"He leads such a life."

"Does he. What is it—play?"

"Bless you, yes!" said the man, who was called Smithson, who was a good sort of fellow, and found living by his wits easier and pleasanter than behind a counter, the natural sphere of his operations; "bless you, yes! Play! all night and all day. He must have some pretty good nerve left to live as he does."

"Do anything, Sir Frederick? Want to back your colt?" said a yellow-looking, stout, heavy-jowled man, in shiny black clothes, and a most respectable look, who had been a stocking-weaver

in the midland counties, and was now the largest better on the Turf.

"Nothing more, thank you, Pearson. I've backed him for all I intend; and I hope he'll win."

"Well, Dorrington, what have you done about Benevenuto?"

"Backed him like the devil," said Lord Dorrington to his inquirer. "It's a comfort to know that he's *meant*. He *does* belong to a gentleman, and he'll be well ridden."

"He's a very easy horse to ride," said the young Marquis of Droughtmore, himself no mean performer over a country, though a little too heavy for the flat. "He has a great turn of speed, and comes when he's called upon. Are you staying here, Dorrington?"

"Yes, at Henry Corry's. It's about three miles from here, across the heath. We have Seymour, Putney, Wilbraham, and that spectral *attaché*, Royston's friend: I forget his name. He's asleep now, I believe; but he comes out with the bats for his rubber, and seems to begin enjoying himself when everybody else is about going to bed."

"What a handsome gipsy!" said Wilbraham, who just joined them, pointing to the figure of an

athletic-looking young fellow, with magnificent eyes, who was apparently watching some knock-'em-downs, but kept the corner of his eye stealthily upon somebody unseen by the party in question. "He'd do to put into training to lick Mildmay's pet for 200*l*. Come, Thornhill, you back the Bohemian, and we'll put him into form in no time. Why, he must be six feet two, if he's an inch; and what a pair of shoulders! His face reminds me of somebody. You're not handsome enough, Dorrington, or I should say it was you."

At that very moment, mounted on the gray colt, led by Turner, Sir Frederick Marston's trainer, and looking the perfection of a gentleman jockey, came Arthur Kildonald. He was a tall, singularly good-looking man, but very spare. His length of thigh gave him a great appearance of power, as well as ease upon his horse; and it was plain to see that what strength he had was above the saddle. He was beautifully dressed; and his colours, dark purple and buff, became him admirably. It was impossible not to notice him. At the best of times his face was not a good face: it wanted honesty of expression, with all its beauty. Now it was deadly pale, and wore a

troubled look. Not far from the horse, amid the crowd that walked by his side admiring his condition, and entering a last bet upon the race, was our old acquaintance Mr. Burke. To a very close observer one significant glance passed between the latter and Kildonald, before he was lost in the crowd. At the same instant Lord Dorrington turned suddenly from the gipsy to the rider. The likeness was sufficiently manifest: there was but the difference between the savage and the civilised man, *au reste* the resemblance was complete.

I have already said that the Bidborough Meeting was select rather than large. It embraced country gentlemen in the Stand, their carriages and wives on the opposite side of the course. The great earl was there, talking to Thornhill, Sir Frederick Marston, and a few more of equal rank. The labourers, servants, and artisans of the neighbourhood appeared in more than a just proportion; their smiles and many-coloured ribbons were the pleasantest part of the scene. The great betting men were there, including the nobility and gentry of England, the real patrons of the Turf: the idlers who backed their fancy

for a pony were there in great numbers. The fine, independent, top-booted farmer and yeoman appeared in great force; and in smaller numbers the *mimi, balatrones, et hoc genus omne.* Half a dozen drags, contained the votaries of Limmers and of Long's; Brookes', White's, and the Clarendon rejoiced in the Stand. The small betting man was not to be found: there was no place for the minor bookmaker, for the lawyer's clerk, and the embryo City man. The importance of the meeting was not sufficient to startle them from their propriety.

I write of a day when the chief proprietors of race-horses were to be found amongst the nobles and gentlemen of England. Horse-racing had not yet become a simple trade. It was presumed that the object of a starter was to win. There were rogues, as there have been before and since the days of Dan Dawson; there was a genius or two emerging from the crowd, whose capabilities for calculation and the king's English were scarcely on a par. But racing was not yet the business of a nation, and the pleasure of the few; what betting there was, was done *con amore.* It was heavy and earnest, as of men backing a con-

viction rather than hedging a speculation. *Nous avons changé tout cela.*

The course was being rapidly cleared. Policemen were active, and the huntsmen and whips of the Bidborough Union Fox-hounds were forming a serried rank of inquisitive yokels some distance below the Stand. The ladies were closing their glove books, and eagerly expecting the race of the day. The last dog had already cleared the course by at least five minutes. Three horses had gone down besides Benevenuto: two were entirely out of it, and the third had nothing but an outside chance against Sir Frederick's horse. The preliminary canter confirmed preconceived notions, and the race was a foregone conclusion. One chance alone remained to the fielders: that Kildonald should make use of his horse all the way, and having alternately raced with each, should finally come back to them. Kildonald was not a likely man to play his adversaries' game, when he knew so well the cards that were out.

They're off! The multitude hold their breath: a murmur: they come: the gray winning. "By heavens! what's Kildonald about? he's at work already; Castleton wins. No, by Jove! the gray

does it now. Castleton, Marston; d—— it, he's stopped him!" shrieks Lord Dorrington and twenty more voices at the same moment, as the mare, quietly ridden by Lord Castleton, is landed a winner by a neck. "It's a cursed robbery!" "It's a swindle!" "He could scarcely help winning, as it was!" "An infernal piece of rascality from beginning to end!" And epithets not complimentary, and curses both loud and deep, were uttered against the rider of Benevenuto, as he rode to scale. It was all over; and the blank looks and empty pockets of the Grand Stand told quite plainly enough that the robbery was none of theirs. Kildonald, amidst the yells of the populace, and half protected from personal injury by the police, entered the Stand. His lips were quivering with suppressed passion, and every muscle of his pale face worked with rage. Turning sharply round, his eye lit upon Geoffrey Thornhill, who was replying in no measured terms to the condolences of the men by whom he was surrounded. He glared like a tiger, and, forcing his way towards him, demanded in tones scarcely audible, but hissing from between his teeth, whether he applied that epithet to him.

"I echo, sir, the sentiment of every man on the course who ever saw a race in his life when I repeat that it is an infernal robbery;" and as he spoke, Thornhill's face, before rather expressive of disappointment, coloured with an effort to control his temper.

"Liar!" rejoined the other, now utterly beside himself; and as he spoke he raised his right hand, in which he held the whip with which he had been riding, and made a blow at his antagonist. His arm was instantly seized, but not before the whip had slightly grazed his cheek. An insult so gross drove all power of restraint from Geoffrey Thornhill, and with one blow he knocked Kildonald into the arms of a bystander. The quarrel was too unseemly to proceed; the friends of either party hurried them away; and whilst Geoffrey Thornhill rejoined his friends in the Stand, Kildonald mounted his hack and rode straight to the cottage of an acquaintance with whom he was staying, about half an hour's walk from the course.

"You were imprudent, Thornhill," said Marston, some two hours later, when every trace of passion had left his friend Geoffrey, and nothing

remained but a consideration of his position in the quarrel.

"I was. But to be first robbed of a very large stake in a most palpable manner, and then struck by such a ruffian as that, is trying." And Thornhill blushed again at the recollection of the indignity.

"Admitted. But why have struck that unfortunate blow? He must leave the country; and your expressions no man can gainsay, though some may blame."

"Good heavens! Marston, how you do talk. Is a man to lose several thousands by such rascality, and stand by and profess to respect it? I had no idea that Kildonald would have heard me; but as it was a robbery, and I had said so, it would not have been dignified to have denied it."

"That was impossible: and now *que faire*." At that moment a gentlemanly-looking man, well known on the turf and in society as a Major Doyle, a mutual acquaintance of Kildonald and Thornhill, of irreproachable character, approached and said, in a grave measured tone, "I beg your pardon for the unpleasant intrusion, but my

instructions leave me no alternative. I am desired by Mr. Kildonald to state that he remains at my house, which is on the heath, and barely two miles from here, until he can have the necessary arrangements for a meeting with Mr. Thornhill. The exigencies of the case preclude all apology, and demand as much despatch as possible."

"Accept my excuses, Major Doyle, for not at once relieving you by appointing a friend to confer with you. The circumstances are such as to require consideration, and I will forward a note or send a friend this evening to your house." The major raised his hat with an elegance characteristic of an Irish gentleman, and Thornhill replied by a bow as distant as courtesy permits.

"Marston, I should ask you to do me the greatest favour that one man can do for another; but one friend older than yourself in length of friendship, and older than either of us in years, must be consulted."

"But you will not fight him?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Why, he's a swindler—a common blackleg."

"We say so. But, remember, he has a little

world of his own, which will not believe it. Unfortunately it is not capable of direct proof, and we have only acted on our convictions. Yes; I must fight him."

"What, then, do you propose?"

"Go home to Lady Marston; keep your own counsel and mine. I shall ride round by Corry's: he is the best fellow alive in cases of this sort. He has had hundreds of them on his hands. He will give me some dinner, see Major Doyle this very evening, and I shall be with you two or three hours later than otherwise. Your hack will not take long going from Sittingdean, which I can reach from Henry Corry's, by the lower side of the heath. Adieu, my dear Marston. Let's send your groom for the horses, and I'll be off. The last race will be over by the time they are at the back of the Stand."

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHALLENGE.

"Captain, I thee beseech to do me favours."
SHAKESPEARE, *Henry V.*

WHEN Geoffrey Thornhill had mounted his hack, and desired Marston to tell them at Sittingdean that he should be there by ten or half-past, he turned with a loose rein over one of the by-paths of the heath, which led amongst clumps of firs and broken patches of sand and gorse to the villas and country-houses scattered over the face of the landscape. The sun was setting; and at another time Thornhill would have probably given a passing thought to the beauty of the scene, or to its adaptability for fox-hunting. He might have admired his clean-shaped, active hack, as he picked his way over the stony and sandy road before him. At present his mind was engrossed with other matter. He had lost a sum of money he could ill spare at the moment; but

"Sufficient to the day" was a favourite proverb of Thornhill's, as it is of many a man in pecuniary matters. No man understood the philosophy of money better than he — at least, if spending or losing it with a cheerful indifference constitute philosophy. He was constitutionally courageous too; and though he was impulsive, and apt to say things which he sometimes regretted, he never shrank from their consequences. His was the regret of a noble mind sorry for having inflicted pain on others, rather than for its effects upon himself. He was not a man to abstain from injustice, or to shrink from acknowledging it.

If a man is ever justified in egotism, it is when he sees a probability or possibility of being shot through the body within the next four-and-twenty hours. Geoffrey Thornhill saw that possibility very plainly before him; and his constitutional courage did not serve to shut out the prospect. The consequence was a gloomy ride to Corry's, in which he peopled the world with his wife and his boys. He rang the bell, and asked if Mr. Corry was at home. He was, and was about to dine: but Mr. Thornhill's card should be

taken to him. In a minute the servant returned with a request that he would sit down for five minutes; Mr. Corry was dressing. The five minutes elapsed before he had sufficiently admired a Titian, a very fine copy (to Thornhill it made very little difference), when Harry Corry appeared.

"Delighted to see you, Thornhill, delighted; we dine directly," said he, ringing the bell. "Mr. Thornhill will dine with us, Thompson; and desire Gregory to see to his horse. We've only three or four men here whom you know. Like to wash your hands; come with me."

"I beg you a thousand pardons, my dear Corry; but I must have five words with you at once."

"No, not a word; nothing before dinner on any consideration: we have just a soup, a fish, and a haunch; an early one from your old friend Lascelles." With these words he hurried Geoffrey Thornhill into a dressing-room, and left him to make his ablutions.

Henry Corry was a man better known almost than any one in London. He was a bachelor of moderate fortune, good family, and heir to an earldom. He was a man of exquisite taste; his

dinners and his pictures were few, but excellent. He associated generally with men younger than himself. His conversation amused, and his highly-bred quiet restrained them. His reputation as a man of the world was at its height; and there was no one to whom men, in difficulty, would apply with more certain prospect of a solution. In all matters connected with fighting or the women, he was an arbiter from whose dictum there was no appeal.

The dinner was good, as well it might be, from the care bestowed upon it; the conversation as vapid as might have been expected from a certain restraint arising from Thornhill's presence. Every one was anxious to put him at his ease on the subject evidently uppermost in his thoughts; but the very desire to do so produced a constraint, unnatural to any of the party. Corry himself, not having been at the races, was sublimely ignorant of the whole transaction, and set down the loss of spirit to the loss of money; though he admitted to himself that it was something new in the constitution of Geoffrey Thornhill or Lord Dorrington. "They must have been confoundedly hit," thought he.

"That's a good picture over the mantelpiece," said Wilbraham, a traveller and would-be connoisseur.

"I think it is; it's the only Claude I have here. That and the Titian, with a couple of Watteaus in the small-drawing-room, with half a dozen of less value, are all I have in this place."

"What a charming repose!" said Mr. Hammond, the spectral attaché before mentioned, who seemed himself just to have awakened out of a sound nap. "That small Spanish picture in my room, I presume a Murillo, has one of the most beautiful faces I ever saw."

"Talking of faces, what a splendid face was that gipsy boy's whom we saw on the course to-day, just before the race. Dorrington found out a likeness, and a very remarkable one;" and here the speaker, quite a young man, blushed, on remembering to whom the supposed resemblance related.

Thornhill hastened to relieve his embarrassment. "Yes, I noticed the likeness myself, talking to Lord Bidborough, as Kildonald rode down. That's an admirable haunch of yours,

Henry Corry. You were not on the heath to-day?"

"No! but I took a walk about a couple of miles to the right of the course, and I rather think I saw Putney's handsome gipsy; he was not far from Doyle's cottage at the time, and seemed to be looking after something — the poultry, I suppose. But, Geoffrey, I beg your pardon, I know you told me you wanted to speak to me; and now that we can leave these men with such a good substitute as that bottle of Lafitte, I dare say they'll excuse us for five minutes, before we make up our rubber." With these words the host rose slowly, and Thornhill and he left the room.

"And now, my dear fellow, how can I oblige you? I see there is something wrong." And Thornhill related to him the occurences of the day.

"This is unfortunate: three days hence you may be able to treat him with contempt, if the world looks upon it in the same light that you do. To-day it is impossible!" and he rang the bell. "Order the brougham round directly."

"Yes, sir;" and the man disappeared.

"Now, Geoffrey, go down to those men, and wait for me. I shall be gone half an hour."

No sooner were Corry and Thornhill gone to the drawing-room, than the tongues were unloosed, and they began to speak plainly. "He must fight, I suppose," said Lord Dorrington, who, however, helped himself to a bumper of claret with as much *nonchalance*, as if fighting was the ordinary occupation of the species.

"I should rather say not," said Putney, who had lately been gazetted to a troop in the —th Hussars. "One don't fight with robbers; at least it's optional; and Kildonald is a robber to all intents and purposes, as much as if he stole my purse." And here the junior captain yawned at his unwonted exertion. "Much more so if the extent of the plunder is taken into consideration; but Thornhill will fight: he has most chivalrous notions on such points."

"He's in good hands, at all events. The claret, please, Wilbraham. When Kildonald is shot, there'll be one scoundrel less in the world, at all events, and we can very well spare him." Here the door opened, and Thornhill re-entered the room.

In the meantime the brougham had driven rapidly towards another part of the heath, and after an application to the bell, Henry Corry descended at the door of Major Doyle's cottage.

"My compliments to Major Doyle, and I shall be glad to speak to him on business of importance;" and Corry tendered his card—whilst through the narrow passage of the house came an occasional ominous rattle of dice; and as the adjoining door opened, something like "Eleven's the nick," smote on his ear. "Ah!" thought the sobered man of the world, "now that there is no one left to devour till to-morrow, they are preying upon each other. Good heavens! to think that a man like Thornhill must place himself upon a level with these men, whose hand is against every man, and whose reputation is not worth half an hour's purchase. Major Doyle, I presume," said he, seeing that a gentleman had entered the room almost suddenly enough to extinguish his cogitations.

"Major Doyle, at your service," replied that individual.

"My business is pressing, Major Doyle, and unpleasant. With its purport you are already

acquainted, when I say I come from my friend, Mr. Thornhill, of Thornhills." Here both gentlemen stopped and looked at one another with considerable uneasiness.

"I fear your mission can have but one result."

"I cannot affect to misunderstand the necessity. It will be needless for us to enter into the cause of this unhappy quarrel—but the sooner the meeting can take place the better."

"It gives me pleasure to meet with such promptness," said the major, whose Irish propensity was about to be indulged so unhesitatingly, and partly anxious about the loss of a day's racing.

"And me pain!" rejoined the other, who saw neither credit nor profit to his man in being first swindled and then shot.

The two gentlemen, however, being so far *d'accord*, laid their heads together, and were not long in making such arrangements for the following morning, as to give the major plenty of time for the transaction of his favourite business, before the calls of his favourite diversion.

When Henry Corry returned to his house, he at once sought Geoffrey Thornhill. He was

playing a rubber, and finished it as unconcernedly as he would have done, had his friend returned with an invitation to dinner. Thornhill's was a strong, perhaps an uncommon mind; it never utterly refused to see things in their true light, but carefully postponed the prospect to the latest moment. Perhaps I am wrong in saying that it was a strong mind; the action of it was in this respect almost involuntary. It was not the true courage, the philosophy of determinate indifference to a distant, though certain result; but rather an habitual carelessness of the future, and an abandonment to the present. It was some physiological deficiency or phrenological defect—perhaps of judgment—which refused to consider a case at all, until positively called on for trial. It increased his popularity, gave him a character for daring, and, to a man of his peculiar habits and temper, saved him and caused him much inconvenience in every way. It is but due to him to add, that when he took the trouble to realise a hard position, he acted with a characteristic boldness, which was not the less genuine because he recognised the reality and extent of his danger.

"My dear Thornhill," said Corry, taking him into an adjoining room when the rubber was over, "knowing your determination to return to Marston's to-night, instead of sleeping here, as I wish you to do, I have succeeded in arranging matters for to-morrow morning at eight o'clock. At the ninth milestone on the Sittingdean road, between this and Marston's, I will meet you to-morrow morning at half-past seven; we can go in my carriage, and you can send Marston's back to the Royal Oak. To avoid exciting suspicion, Major Doyle will come at the back of Sittingdean, by another road; Kildonald sleeps at Sittingdean to-night, and he will pick him up on his way to-morrow. I know you too well, my dear fellow, to impress upon you punctuality in such a matter; and you know me well enough to tell me whether there's anything else in this business in which I can be of service to you. In case of accident, the place is the back of the old ruin in Owlston Park, and the time eight o'clock."

"Thank you, thank you, Corry, a thousand times; and now let me ring for my horse."

CHAPTER X.

HOMEWARD.

"L'homme propose et Dieu dispose."

When Geoffrey Thornhill started on his road to Sittingdean the moon was not yet up. The first mile or two from the cottage he was leaving, the road was tolerably good; and the night not being absolutely dark, he pushed on at a rapid pace, not less in accordance with a sort of feverish anxiety, than from a wish to reach his temporary home as early as possible. The atmosphere, however, was still and heavy; and he was not long before he felt the heat somewhat oppressively. As the road advanced into the common it became more full of holes and ruts; and mindful of the possibility of laming his horse at such a distance from the village where he expected his second hack, he pulled him into a walk, and allowed him to pick his way at leisure. Having once stopped the pace he was going, his mind

took the thoughtful tone which accorded more with the rate of speed to which he was now reduced. He lit a cigar, and at that moment the moon rose over the tops of the low fir trees which skirted the road irregularly on either side. Thornhill knew the road pretty well, though he could scarcely be said to be familiar with it. He remembered that for about a mile the deep sandy lane with heavy blocks of loose sandstone, and a steep and dark bank on either side, overgrown with gorse bushes and heather, with stunted trees, terminated in a very sharp descent. From this place on so light a night, the whole was capital galloping ground into the road by Sittingdean, from which place an hour and a half's sharp riding on a fresh horse would bring him to his journey's end. He could the better then afford a quarter of an hour's leisurely riding, whilst he smoked his cigar: and conned his position and his course of action for the morrow.

His thoughts could not well be cheerful: they turned naturally towards his home; for though a thorough man of pleasure, he was warm-hearted and impulsive. His love for his children was genuine and deep, and his pride in his eldest boy,

his accomplishments and his person, was unalloyed by any selfish feeling. Had Thornhill been less spoilt by the world, he would have better appreciated the happiness of his home. He had married a woman amiable, good, elegant, with country tastes and habits, and an intense admiration for her husband, but deficient in any strong attraction either of character or of manner. Exercising but little influence in her house, over either her husband or her children, Mrs. Thornhill had sailed calmly down the stream, an admirable example to her neighbours, a good village Lady Bountiful, a favourite with everybody, but with no power to divert from its current or to check in its career a strong stream of careless profusion, and selfish pleasure and indulgence, which was the more dangerous as it was joined to some estimable and many popular qualities. "Ah! if my nephew Geoffrey had but married Lady Marston, or a woman like that," said old Lady Chesterton, the ruling providence of the county and the great agent for matrimonial alliances in the midland counties; and the suggestion was echoed by all Thornhill's well-wishers. They probably knew nothing about it; but it is

just possible that he might have been a better man, and Emily Carisbrook a happier woman. I presume Lady Marston was considered equal to the emergency.

In this fit of blue devils, rather than in serious meditation, Thornhill rode on. Having cleared the worst part of the road, he had reached the very steep descent between the scattered firs and box which threw a gloom over this part of the heath, and was just beginning the descent, when we leave him to turn to others whose interest in the story is greater.

One hour before he had started from Henry Corry's villa, two persons appeared in the lower part of the heath, having apparently walked from the neighbourhood of Sittingdean. They had not really done so. The reader has been already made acquainted with them. They were Mike Daly and George. They seemed, by the road they were taking, to be making the best of their way across the heath, towards the gipsy encampments in the close neighbourhood of or on the course itself, ready for the morrow. By this route they would cross the road which Geoffrey Thornhill must follow on his way to

Sittingdean, as that was the only horse road, the bridle cuts being invisible and quite useless in the dark to any but foot passengers, and they tolerably acquainted with them.

"Hist, George, aisy; I hear a step."

"No such thing," said George in a hoarse whisper, which trembled with emotion; "he can't be here this two hours or more; he was not likely to start till eleven or later. What's the hour?"

"By the night, about half-past nine or ten."

"Then halt here; he must pass by this road; there's no wind, and we can hear every sound that stirs. These tall dark firs would hide Satan himself," and as he spoke he seated himself under a tree within ten paces of the narrow defile to which I have before alluded. Mike did the same.

"What did Lawyer Burke do at the races, Mike? He ought to pay ye well for this job."

"It's the good name he has in Kerry, anyhow; sure he's the poor man's frind; he won't see me want."

"He's a scoundrel, Mike; a low, beggarly scoundrel, that gets the oyster and throws you

the shells." Here George listened once more, but nothing was to be heard, and he resumed his listless attitude against the tree.

"How do ye know his time, Master George? Maybe he's gone, and I'll never have such a chance again. I'll be able to leave the country entirely."

"How do I know his time? I've been to the cottage, and where there are women you may know anything." George was a bit of a philosopher, and a close observer of human nature.

"Now I hear a horse," said he, as a slow even step, occasionally striking a stone, and breaking into a momentary jog, smote his ear. "It's close at hand, Mike, steady;" and they simultaneously rose and approached the edge of the road, under cover of the firs.

About an hour or rather more after Thornhill had left Henry Corry's villa, the stable gates of Major Doyle's unpretending tenement, which was rented for the race-week by himself and a betting man or two, opened; and there issued from them a smart clever-looking hack, carrying no other than Arthur Kildonald. The moon was now up, and the way lay clearer than in the earlier part

of the evening. The gambler's face was pale, and the passion which tore him found ready vent in accelerated pace. His reflections were not pleasant; he held, it is true, in Burke's note of hand for 3000*l.* a means of escape from this country; but the deliberate robbery of which he had been guilty in the morning would have necessitated that absence since its discovery, and carried with it some very painful inconveniences. He would fain have retired like a graceful actor, regretted for the time, and with a hope of an occasional return. All his hatred, too, for Geoffrey Thornhill, his absurd and mistaken prejudices against him as the purchaser of his Irish property, and his fear of his bold and resolute nature, lashed him into a fury, as he trotted sharply over the uneven ground that entered upon the road over the heath. One other circumstance had not escaped his notice; amongst his own set he had lost caste. It's a bad thing to be found out. He had committed a robbery, but he had never committed a palpable blunder before. Besides Major Doyle, perhaps scarcely one of the party he had left would have hesitated to do what he had done. They at-

tached no more discredit to the fact than, scarcely indeed so much as, he did himself; but they bore very hardly upon the discovery of it, and regarded it as a serious blow to the party. This was not a pleasant subject of contemplation; he was to be let down by his own set; and though Major Doyle's notions of honour forbade him to desert his late guest, Kildonald felt the terms on which he was to have the Major's countenance in his meeting with Geoffrey Thornhill. The duel itself was one in which no credit could accrue to him. His opponent was too popular a man to be shot at with impunity; and now the quarrel, though unavoidable, was of his own seeking. "Fool, fool!" said he to himself, "why was not I deaf or dumb? why did my accursed ill luck throw me in the way of that villain Burke? and poor Norah and the boy; Good God! if anything happens to-morrow, what's to become of them? I must trust Doyle." In this spirit he rapidly neared the dark and broken descent whither we conducted Geoffrey Thornhill, and on the side of which we left standing Mike Daly and George in the shade of the dark trees. Already was he at

the top of the descent which the others had reached some time before; forgetful of the badness of the road, which for a hundred yards was almost perpendicular, he was already urging his horse to continued speed, when, with a fearful plunge and a violent snort which would have unseated a worse horseman, thus unexpectedly, the hack refused to proceed.

The whist party which we left at Henry Corry's was not one to be disturbed by ordinary circumstances. It consisted of pure men of the world; not without natural feelings, certainly not without refinement, but well exercised by constant friction against society, which hardened while it polished. Corry himself was depressed more than might have been expected by an episode of less rare occurrence than in the present day. The four or five men who surrounded the card-table divided their attention more than usually between uncomfortable anticipations and their cards; but as the stakes were high, it can hardly be said that the former had so much of their attention as the latter.

"Five pounds on the rubber, Corry," said

Wilbraham, who had been silent some time, in deference to his host, but who felt compelled to say something pleasant to break the silence.

"Certainly. Which do you wish to back?"

"Dorrington, of course; he always holds cards."

"Be it so;" and Henry Corry again relapsed into silence. He was leaning against the mantelpiece, with his back to a small fire, which had been lighted during dinner. The room in which they were playing was furnished in a most elaborate manner. All that money, combined with taste, could command, was to be met with there. The ornaments were of the most refined character. Sèvres china of the most beautiful description; statuettes, from the choicest originals; marqueterie and ormolu, with handsome mirrors proportioned to the moderate dimensions of the room; few pictures, as has been said, but valuable, and handsomely bound works of the best authors; rich hangings, and luxurious chairs of various shapes and kinds, combined comfort with elegance, seldom to be met with in a country villa so far removed from large cities. It might have been the retreat of a modern Mæcenas, or

the consolation of a fallen minister, or bankrupt merchant.

"How's the game, Seymour?"

"Dorrington and I win the trick: we are four to three, and a single up. At present your fiver looks well."

"The room's hot," said Corry. "Would you like a window opened for five or ten minutes? Putney, are you afraid of the draught?"

"Not I," said the captain. Corry opened a window partially, which looked on to the lawn. At the same moment a horse came down the road from the heath at a fearful pace, and a ring at the door-bell announced an unexpected guest. Sharp, quick, and agitated tones of inquiry were heard in the hall, and as the servant threw open the door without the announcement of any name, an unwelcome figure stood before the astonished party.

It was Kildonald. Notwithstanding the pace he had evidently ridden, his face was perfectly ghastly; large drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead, his hair was matted with damp, and hung in dishevelled locks over his brows; terror seemed to have utterly taken away his

speech, for he reeled and staggered into a chair, with scarcely ability to say, "Quick—quick, for God's sake! Thornhill——" Here the whist-players rose, and Henry Corry came forward with a cold and resolute manner, saying, "To what, sir, am I to attribute this honour? Pray explain." But he was cut short by Kildonald, who repeated in more collected, but no less earnest tones, "Thornhill is murdered! Quick—quick, gentlemen. Villains have been beforehand: his blood be upon their heads, not mine. He lies on the road by the glen, four or five miles from here, before you come to the Sitting-dean road. Pray send out at once. But it's too late." The bell was rung.

"Gregory, saddle Lord Dorrington's mare and my hack instantly; and tell Jervis to bring round the brougham again. Mr. Kildonald's horse is at the door." Here Henry Corry followed his servant out of the room. "And let one of the men on whom you can depend go down to the nearest constable, and bring him up here, to wait till our return."

In ten minutes' time they were on the road, the brougham following them, as best it could,

over the rugged road, to the scene of the terrible catastrophe.

And there on the road, at the top of the descent, beneath a dark mass of firs and box, lay the lifeless body of Geoffrey Thornhill.

CHAPTER XI.

TIME FOR REFLECTION.

"Pompa mortis magis terret quam mors ipsa."

So terrible and unprovoked a fate creates alarm under the most ordinary circumstances. The excitement is not lessened when the victim is wealthy, popular, and high-born. In the present case there was something doubly terrible. The next day he might have had on his own hands the blood of a fellow-creature: though the amount of guilt in the one case would have borne but a small proportion, in the eyes of the world, to that of the other.

It is our happiness to live in a day when the true courage of a Christian gentleman may exhibit itself in declining to risk his life, or to risk taking the life of another. This relic of barbarous chivalry has passed away from before us. Whether we are to thank increasing civilization for the boon; a more plentiful admixture of

middle-class blood, with its prejudices in favour of long life and respectability, amongst the more chivalrous, but less considerate successors of Norman aristocracy; or the softening influences of a woman's court—of a court that teaches the distinction between the true and the false, the glitter of base metal and the sterling ring of the solid, by the happiest example, it is not for us to say. We are satisfied with the fact: and if there still remains an argument or two for the admirers of the duel, in the difficulty of meteing out a proper punishment for certain offences, we can always reply that there is a higher chivalry, and a more enduring courage which enables us to bear.

The coroner's inquest returned a verdict in accordance with the evidence—"Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown." They could make nothing of it. That Kildonald was an object of much suspicion is not to be wondered at. The evidence at first was so strong that the magistrates were much censured for not having committed him to take his trial. After continued remands, and very heavy bail, it was found necessary to discharge him. Two or three

circumstances spoke strongly in his favour—or rather against the supposition of his having committed the murder.

First of all it was very clear that Arthur Kildonald had left Major Doyle's house long after the time that Geoffrey Thornhill had quitted Henry Corry and his guests. Indeed, it might have been presumed that Thornhill was already near upon Sittingdean. There was also a strong presumption that Kildonald went out unarmed; whilst it was clear that the murder was committed with a pistol, though the weapon remained undiscovered. The idea even that the former had waited for him, and fell as the result of an equal combat, was negatived by the fact that a blow of a very violent character had been given on the temple, though death was caused by the bullet, which had penetrated the brain. The two men had no means of ascertaining the movements of each other, and were not likely to have anticipated by a few hours the vengeance which the morning would have accorded them. The purse and watch of Thornhill had either escaped the vigilance of the assassin, or were purposely overlooked; his betting book, and a

small pocket-book which he usually carried, were gone. In a word, an impenetrable mystery veiled the event, which grew no lighter as time rolled on. The gipsies were not forgotten; and a few desperate characters who frequented the heath about race time were taken before the Bidborough justices, but nothing could be made of them; and before the end of a month the town and neighbourhood had resumed their wonted stupidity and quiet. A murder a month would have scarcely made it habitable.

It was not long before the recollection of Thornhill and his many accomplishments was confined to the police and his own immediate friends and family. Lord Dorrington and his set went their ways, some to their farms, none to their merchandise. The covers were still at Thornhills; they still held pheasants and foxes; and the new heir would probably take back the hounds when he came of age: and the widow in the meantime would issue the customary invitations, and Thornhills would be the same, the master only excepted.

"Terrible business, that death of poor Thornhill," said Captain Boldthrow, on the steps of

Crockford's, a month or two after the catastrophe. "It must have quite spoilt Corry's Bidborough party. The widow's jointure is small, rather. She has the manor-house and 1200*l.* a-year."

"Charming woman!" rejoined his companion, Dicky Calthorp, of the Blues. "Twelve hundred a-year is not to be got every day. By the way, Dorrington, do you know that the lost betting-book has come to light in rather a mysterious manner? It came directed to Marston, from Dublin; and it seems to have been given to the guard of the Cork mail by a fellow in a labourer's dress, as they changed horses at some place or other. I'm afraid it will break up our shooting party for next year. Does any one know anything about that big brown horse of Thornhill's, that carried him so well in the Cottesmore country last year?"

"Nobody knows more about him than you do, Calthorp. He left you all, as if you were standing still. At least, so Castleton declares; and he was the only one within a quarter of a mile of him."

"Well! he'll be sold on Monday week with the rest of them; they're none of them to be

kept. I met his brother, the banker, just this minute in Pall Mall, and he told me all about it. He and Marston are the trustees."

And by the time the horses were sold, and the season came round again, "the best fellow in the world" was as much forgotten, almost, as if he had never existed.

But there were others whose memories were not so short. Sir Frederick and Lady Marston had not ceased to sorrow for their old friend, and lavished their regrets in affection for his widow and children. The shock to Mrs. Thornhill had been great indeed. She hung over their early days, and wondered whether she had done all she might have done to make the home of Geoffrey Thornhill what it ought to have been. God bless her! she tried to discover a fault where none existed, and to hide some provocations which had been too apparent until now. And the boys often looked back to their last parting, when their indulgent, good-humoured father left them, Tom on the bridge at Eton, and Charlie at the office of the S—— coach, as he started him on his journey to Dr. Gresham: they little thought for the last time. "Sublatum

ex oculis quærimus invidi." Amiable as he was, he had never appeared so amiable as now.

But time, the great assuager of ills, wrought its usual effect. The boys returned to school. Tom plunged into every amusement, and, gifted with great capacity, was equally a favourite with the masters as with his schoolfellows. He exhibited a disposition singularly akin to that of his father. He was eminently handsome, and already began to appreciate the advantages of his social position. Notwithstanding the democratic tendency of its institutions, there is no place where a boy so soon discovers the power and influence that wealth and high birth confer. It was impossible, too, for a clever, intelligent boy like Tom Thornhill not to see that his father's death had made a sensible difference in the estimation in which he was held. Most persons are ready enough to worship the rising sun: not the less so when unobscured by clouds. As a youngster, every one was ready to give him a construe, or to do his verses; nobody fagged him; as to cleaning other boots, he could have found those who would almost have licked his own. As he grew older, he became the fashion:

the sincerest flattery is imitation. They copied his dress, his manner, and his slang; his juniors admired him, his equals courted him, and his seniors delighted to honour him. His name was in every mouth. There was nothing too good for him, nothing he could not do; and if a too confident parent ventured during the holidays to sound the praises of man, woman, or child, the answer was, invariably, "You should just see Tom Thornhill." Is it wonderful if his mother regarded him with intense admiration? And we may be pretty sure that her friends and neighbours were made to participate in her pleasure. Even old Lady Chesterton, with her sombre beard and impracticable crutched stick, was obliged to admit that, if he was half what he was represented, they should never find a wife for him.

At his father's death it had been ascertained that Charlie was just beyond the age at which he could be received at Eton. It was wisely determined that he should return to Dr. Gresham. S—— was at that time, if not so *récherché*, to the full as eminent as Eton. Its numbers, it is true, were not more than half that of that

fashionable institution; but its scholarship and its flogging were certainly equal, if not superior, to anything of its day. Dr. Gresham himself was a man of most brilliant talent, sound learning, and, rarer still, of varied accomplishments, which great scholarship, for some reason or other, was generally supposed to exclude. But he was more than this. He was a most admirable schoolmaster, combining a happy playfulness of disposition, with a power of influencing young minds to an almost incredible extent. Into these hands Mrs. Thornhill, by the advice of her executors, confided her younger son.

The distinguishing feature in Charlie Thornhill, as at present exhibited, was a lively distaste to every species of learning. To say for what he had or had not talent, was equally difficult. He hated classics; but this cannot be said to have implied any love for mathematics: his contempt for the models of antiquity was quite unaccompanied by any regard for modern literature. The leading article of the "Times" and the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments" alike failed to excite any warmer feeling than sheer indifference. His principal reading was culled

from "Bell's Life," and the sporting periodical literature of the day; but if he could indulge in cricket, boating, a run with the beagles, or even the more modest pleasures of a rat hunt, out of school, he seldom denied himself those enjoyments for the sake of any literature whatever. He usually managed to get off, however, without getting on, and did sufficient, or allowed others to do sufficient for him, to keep his place in the school. With all this love of exercise and sport, he might rather be said to be determined than energetic. He never entered even on his amusements rashly, but with a coolness and precision which gave them the dignity of a principle. He was the most popular boy in the school: not exactly in the same way as his brother Tom, who took popularity by storm, but by a sort of persevering good temper and a just discrimination between right and wrong, more frequently admired than imitated. They were both sportsmen by nature and education: Tom threw his heart into the business, Charlie lent it the aid of his head too. He had great powers of observation, quickness of apprehension, and much quiet humour. Had he had

enemies, his determination would have been called obstinacy; and the distinguishing feature of his mind was good common sense. He was rather good looking than handsome, with what is commonly known as a good face; he had an excellent figure, combining activity with strength: and, notwithstanding his antipathy to school work, was a little older than his years. And yet so little was he understood, that at sixteen he was regarded as "The Dunce of the Family."

CHAPTER XII.

CHARLIE TAKES THE WATER LIKE A DOG.

"Quid juvat errores mersâ jam puppe fateri."

An event of so great importance as the death of a father is calculated to make a deep impression: when that death is sudden and mysterious it is doubly so. The death of Geoffrey Thornhill had its due weight with his boys in a different degree. Tom appeared to feel it most acutely at first: but his was a nature prone to receive impressions quickly, and to lose them with equal rapidity. Charlie's grief was more subdued, but more lasting. It had greater real effect upon his character. Such events do not change our nature, they mould and control it. So it was with Charlie. He was in no respect essentially changed from what he had been, but was sobered, steadied, aged: in his case an unnecessary process, as it seemed to us all. Many persons ventured to hint that it would have been

well if Tom had benefited in the same way. Such people are not accustomed to analysis, or they would have seen, from the nature of things, that the case was an impossible one.

It is not difficult to conceive circumstances, independently of character, which produced these feelings, and acted thus differently upon each of the boys. The position of both was materially altered. Tom had suddenly become a great man, if not in years, at least in position. Men see themselves as frequently with the eyes of the world as with their own; and after all, for all practical purposes, the view in which the world regards us is the just one. It generally forms a pretty correct estimate of our value. The world chose to regard Tom Thornhill of Thornhills as a very lucky fellow, and measured him by the length of his purse, his genealogical tree, and the extent of his acres, as carefully as Hammond would have measured him for his trousers, or Poole for his coat. And it saved Tom a great deal of trouble to take the same line and plummet for self-adjustment. He saw that certain things were expected of him, and he hoped not to disappoint expectations. Why should he? Let

us acknowledge at once that when he did, it was not on the right side.

As the son of Mr. Thornhill of Thornhills, Charlie had been a boy of some consideration among his fellows. He had a large house in which to ring the bells, handsome stabling to show his school-fellows, a keeper at his service, as far as the rabbits were concerned, and a horse that went by the name of Master Charles's mare. In these distinguishing marks of Fortune's favour the world shut its eyes to the real position of our hero. That is, all but a few Belgravian mothers of most astute capabilities, and whose scent is as keen after an elder son, as that of the truest hunter in the kennels of the Quorn or the Pytchley after the hunted fox. Their instinct teaches them the true prince. And now that his father was dead the world was compassionately blind. For Charlie still had the same house, servants, horses, and dogs. He did not ask yet whence they came: and, to do his world justice, it had not as yet forced the inquiry upon him. However, he was wise enough not to wait for its verdict, but to put himself upon his own trial, and stood self-convicted. Outlawry from the good things

to which he had been accustomed was a hard sentence to pronounce, and judgment deferred was pleasanter. So he accepted his position for the present, but did not shut his eyes to the future. A less indolent disposition it might have made act: as it was, it only made Charlie think.

"What a quiet fellow you are, Thornhill!" said Teddy Dacre, a delicate, handsome boy about sixteen years of age, to Charlie, as they leaned over the parapet of the school gardens, a large open court abutting on the street in front of the school chapel and library, a very fine old building of the reign of Edward VI., the founder of the school; a place in which most of the boys lounged about at odd times, and in which they were now waiting for the twelve o'clock calling over, having just come out of second school. "What a quiet fellow you are, Thornhill; you never do anything now."

"That's because you do it all for me, Teddy."

"Oh, I don't mean school work: I mean licking the snobs and poaching at Birdington. What lots of rabbits there are there! Do you know Swan and I were nearly caught by the keepers at Grassfield, setting night lines."

"Were you? What do you think Gresham would have done if he'd caught you?"

"Oh! I don't know. He couldn't have flogged us, you know, because he never does flog fifth-form fellows."

"No. And that's one reason why I don't poach at Grassfield and lick the snobs, Teddy. You see, when he could flog us it didn't matter much, because you took your chance; now it's a shame, because he wouldn't like to expel us for it; and so we put the old Doctor in rather a fix. I think it's a shame."

"What a jolly form that fourth form was!"

"So it was," said Charlie, with a sigh. "And I almost wish I was back in it. But tell us about the fishing."

"Well, Swan and I were coming back from the big perch hole close by the side of the water, when who should we meet" (Teddy was not so good at his English, you see) "but that big keeper with the black whiskers and the smooth white terrier. He came straight up to us, of course, and asked where we had been. So we told him we'd been to the warren for a walk."

"That was a lie, Teddy."

"So he said. And then he took hold of Swan's rod, and as his pockets were full of night lines and hooks he was obliged to let it go. Then he told us to go with him to the Hall; and as we walked along by the side of the brook, when we came to the big hole we—we—we——"

"Bolted, I suppose?"

"Shoved him in, and then we bolted. We knew he could swim, because he told us so once before, when he found a hole in the bottom of his corracle."

"You'll be found out; for he's got Swan's rod, hasn't he?"

"Yes; but that doesn't signify. It's got no name on it."

"Teddy, 'pon my soul you're incorrigible. I suppose your governor's a magistrate?"

"Of course he is. What of that?"

"Only, the next time he commits a vagrant, or a poacher, or any of those fellows, you go and listen to the case. Now I'm going to calling over, and then, if you like, we'll go and bathe."

The walk to the bathing-place was beautiful. It was about a mile from the school, along the banks of the river, which were here broken into

ledges of sand and ironstone, and interspersed with low bushes, gorse, and firs. The stream flowed with a broad and powerful current; now shallow and rapid, as hurried thought is wont to be; now in a still and quiet corner eddying and turning back again upon itself, as deep meditation: bringing to the surface the lighter matter, but sinking the weightier below. The greater number of the fellows who intended bathing had run on before in company with Nixon the bathing-man, an amphibious, otter-like sort of person, who was engaged to take care of the bathing-places, and give what instruction and help might be wanted in swimming. He was a cunning old dog was Mr. Nixon, and under his ostensible profession of bathing-man he concealed that of dealer in contraband game, spirits, tobacco, and terriers. He always had a few ferrets, and not unfrequently a gamecock or two, belonging to the Pickles of the first class. His wife was the cook, washerwoman, and general store dealer to a certain portion of the school, and dispensed the most extravagant tea, sugar, twopenny loaves, pats of butter, and gooseberry and rhubarb tarts, that can well be conceived. Nixon had been a soldier; and

the iniquitous old rascal added much discipline to leaven his laxity of morals. Charlie Thornhill and Edward Dacre set out with the idea of coming up with this worthy and his companions. Before long they had left the precincts of the school behind them, and were following the beaten track by the side of the eddying river.

"What sort of a fellow is your brother Tom, Thornhill?" said Dacre, stopping to strike a light for a cigar.

"Are you going to smoke, Teddy?"

"Yes. I always do. So do you, Thornhill, sometimes, for I've seen you. I do it for my chest," added the boy, laughing as he spoke, and pulling away at a very horrible and highly adulterated cabbage-leaf. "So they can't say much if I am caught."

"Of course you do. And I smoke for corns, Teddy. So they can't say much if I'm caught."

"Come, Charlie, that's a good'un," said he, laughing again, and puffing away harder than ever to keep it alight.

"No better than yours, Teddy. And you may be quite sure, when we are caught, nobody will believe a word of either story. Here's

the sixth form bathing-place. What a jolly spot!"

"Let's lie down here, Thornhill. But you've not told me yet about your brother Tom. I've a cousin at Eton, and he says he's the best fellow in the school."

"So he is," said Charlie, who always grew enthusiastic on this topic at least. He had but two at present: one was fox-hunting, and the other his brother Tom. "So he is; he's a splendid fellow, Teddy. He's such a good-looking fellow. And can't he ride! My poor governor's horses were rather too big for him; but he kept two of them, and Sir Frederick Marston says he's to have two more this winter. He's going to Oxford next year. And he's such a good-natured fellow, too. He gave me this watch last holidays, and a new gun: it's as light as a feather, and such a killer!"

"Jocelyn says he's the cleverest fellow in the school, only he never reads," said the other.

"Ah! Tom can do without reading. You should see him do his holiday task; he always does it all in the last three days. He'd astonish old Gresham with his Greek iambics. Lord,

how I do hate verses! You haven't any brother?" This was said in a melancholy tone. Charlie had not had time to realize the pleasures of that deprivation.

"No; but I've some sisters. They're stunners, too, I can tell you."

"What do you call them?"

"Why, the eldest is Alice: she's dark, with such jolly hair," rejoined Dacre, who was almost as enthusiastic about them as Charlie was about his brother. "And the other's Edith: she's fifteen. You should just see her ride after my uncle Jocelyn's harriers. She jumped such a place the last time we were out!"

"Why, I didn't know you were a sportsman, Teddy."

"Well, I don't care much about it. It's such a bore. I like lying on the lawn and reading novels best. I think I shall bathe, it's so hot."

"Come on, then."

"Oh, I shall bathe here; the sixth-form fellows don't come till the afternoon. It's such a nuisance to have to walk any more."

"You'll get a licking if any fellow sees you."

"Nobody will see me; so here goes." And he commenced preparations by taking off his coat at once.

"That's just like you, Dacre." And thinking that a good thrashing might be useful to all boys of sixteen, even himself, and *à fortiori* to his friend, Charlie Thornhill ceased remonstrance, and laid himself down on the bank to smoke.

Where Charlie's mind had wandered did not seem quite clear; perhaps he was thinking of his mother, or Tom, or his best friend, Lady Marston. He might have wandered back to the days of the squire, or he might have been wondering what would become of himself when it came to be his turn to scud through the world, as the clouds he was looking at, now brightly and slowly, heavily and loweringly, or fitfully and ever-changing, when he was roused by a sudden cry for help. Dacre could swim, and he looked rapidly round, expecting some trick, when to his surprise he saw nothing. He waited an instant, when the boy's head rose to the surface, near an old oaken stump in the bed of the river. The face was just above the water, and as the limbs below struggled con-

vulsively, the face sank again with a look of such agony and a stifled cry of such terror as left no doubt as to the reality of the situation. Stripping off his coat and waistcoat, he plunged in and swam to the stump. Taking the precaution to seize this with his left arm, he stretched out the right hand in the direction of the body. For a few seconds his efforts were unavailing to raise the head, but at length, by the exertion of all his strength, he succeeded in dragging it to the tree. Here he held it firmly, and ascertained the cause of the poor fellow's submersion by the weight of the weeds which had attached themselves to his legs and feet. He was just calculating upon his capability to get the boy safely to the shore from the tree on which he was lying, when fortunately he heard the voices of Nixon and his companions. "Quick! Quick!" shouted Charlie Thornhill. "Quick, Nixon! Help! help!" And as the sounds reached him, they all came running round the bank in time to see Charlie, almost exhausted by the strength of the stream around the tree, the weight of his own clothes, and the apparently lifeless body of poor Teddy Dacre, which he still with difficulty supported. A small round boat

made of tarpaulin lay on the river's bank, close at hand. In a moment Nixon was in it, and steering with his one paddle down stream to the tree; but he was scarcely in it before it began to fill, and Nixon, within three feet of the boys, abandoned his corracle and took the water. Once on the old stump, a favourite place from which the sixth-form boys were accustomed to take headers, he was able to relieve Charlie of part of his burden, and in another minute they were safe on shore, with Teddy Dacre between them. Having got rid of the water, and restored animation by the best means in their power, with the assistance of a labourer who was fortunately at home, they got Dacre to a cottage; and after rest and cordials they returned on their way to school.

Of course Dacre and Charlie were absent at dinner: and the cause of it was not long in transpiring.

"Nearly gone, Teddy," said Thornhill, as they walked along.

"Oh! Charlie, Charlie, how can I ever—" and here Teddy burst into tears.

"There, Teddy, old fellow, never mind that;

you'd have done the same yourself: it's all over now."

"Except the licking: perhaps they'll let me off, as I was so very nearly drowned."

"I shouldn't, if I was a sixth-form fellow, I can tell you: I'm all for justice: and though I don't think you ought to have been drowned, I am quite sure you ought to be thrashed."

The next day at twelve o'clock a lower-form boy came into the school-gardens, and said, "Thornhill, the fellows want you in the sixth-form private room."

"Do they—who told you so?"

"Scott told me to tell you."

"All right," and he went.

When he arrived there was no doubt about the business on hand. Teddy Dacre, looking very foolish, stood at the foot of a long table, round which, in various attitudes, sitting or standing, were several of the sixth form: "Thornhill," said the head boy, "tell us all about this, for the water has washed it all out of Dacre." Thornhill related the circumstances as succinctly as possible.

"Then he was bathing in our place?"

"Yes."

"Desecrating our Nereus, the protector of our streams and groves: no wonder the divinity seized him by the leg—I wonder he ever let him go."

"He was very nearly drowned," said Charlie, suggestive of a reprieve.

"Thanks to you that he wasn't quite: 'Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum,' he must be punished. Who is the prepositor for the day? Humphreys, prepare the block. As to you, Thornhill, you're a good fellow, and the school ought to be as proud of you as if you were senior medallist, or Ireland scholar. Is there anything that we can do for you?"

"Yes, let off Dacre. The only use of punishment is to deter himself and others from the same thing; and he didn't look as if he would ever forget his sensations."

"You'll be an honour to the woolsack, if you take to that line. We will let him off, as justice has been avenged. Dacre, respect the rights of your superiors, and write a copy of twenty verses on 'The Advantages of Obedience.'"

Dacre looked relieved and gratefully at Thorn-

hill. As they left the room there was a buzz of applause, and the hum of many voices, amongst which rose one distinctly, which said, "By Jove, that fellow Thornhill's not such a fool as they take him for."

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR HOLIDAY.

"And this beauteous morn
(The prim'st of all the year) presents me with
A brace of horses."—*Two Noble Kinsmen*, Act III., Scene 1.

Locke remarks that time is a "consideration of duration, as set out by certain periods, and marked by certain measures or epochs." We have no inclination to call in question this definition. It is rather arbitrary in some cases. The sportsman marks it probably by such days as the 12th of August, the 1st of September, or of November, or by such local associations as the Highlands, Norfolk, Kirby Gate, and the Derby. Servants, I apprehend, by the month; a month's wages or a month's warning. Young Rapid by his Christmas bills; and schoolboys by their holidays—hebdomadal, trimestrial, or semestrial, as the case may be. No man is so fortunate as to forget it altogether. We may

cut the acquaintance of the hoary veteran with his scythe for days, months, years, if we always pay ready money, or not at all: but he will not be denied *in toto*. He makes our acquaintance inevitably, and bows us out at last. Charlie knew nothing about it, excepting on two great occasions—summer and winter vacation. Then he met his brother Tom, rode his own mare, or Tom's horses: shot rabbits with the keeper: went to town to see the pantomimes: enjoyed juvenile county society at the county houses; and was considered presentable at an archery meeting or a picnic; when he dutifully laid the cloth, unharnessed the horses, put down the cushions, boiled the kettle, and made himself generally useful, as boys should do.

As vacation after vacation came and went, Charlie Thornhill increased in stature and popularity, and confirmed the good opinion that had been formed of him. His friendship with Dacre continued uninterrupted from the date of the circumstances detailed in the last chapter. The one seemed never to forget the obligation he was under; the other had forgotten everything connected with it, save the impression of protection,

which it appeared to have left upon his mind. Having once saved his life, Charlie considered it an incumbent duty to make it as beneficial to him as possible. Teddy Dacre had left Charlie standing still, in the scholastic race: socially the positions were reversed. It was not his physical strength which was greater, nor talent which was less, than that of Dacre, but it was the force of character and habit. They were just in the same position as when Dacre used to tell Charlie about his sisters, and when Charlie fished Dacre out of the stream.

"A note for Mr. Thornhill," said John, the doctor's own man, as he threw open the door of the hall; "where's Mr. Thornhill?"

"Not here, John, but as you seem rather groggy about the pins, I'll take it for you," replied a very precocious-looking young gentleman as he scrutinised John's crooked legs.

John did not think an encounter of wits worth his time, so retired, gravely placing the note upon the table to take its chance.

"I say, Forester, where's Thornhill?"

"How should I know?"

"Well, you had better find out pretty quickly,

and take that note, or you may get a licking. I think I know where it comes from: it's to ask him out for holiday Sunday."

"How do you know that?" said Forester.

"Because I know that old Thoroughgood meant to ask Charlie Thornhill to the steeplechase on Saturday, and I saw his groom in the school lane. He wants Thornhill to ride one of the ponies: so just be off with the note at once, young fellow, or you'll get a licking. If he's not in Dawson's study, he's at old Mother Shipley's; she keeps his dog." And true enough at old Mother Shipley's was Charlie, regaling himself and Snap on a stewed beefsteak, and anxiously inquiring after some rats, which might have been intended for meat pies, to judge of the tone in which the request was urged. They were really to decide the merits of a rough-coated terrier, and the smooth highly-bred bull which Charlie was fondling and feeding alternately. The note proved to be from old Squire Thoroughgood to ask Thornhill, with some half-dozen of his school-fellows, to spend what was called Holiday Sunday at the Cliff, a charming spot about ten miles from the school, and an

especial favourite with all the boys. There lived Squire Thoroughgood—an honest, independent, country gentleman of the old school. He had a good estate, a good-looking family of five boys, a clear conscience, and an admirable digestion. He was a man of middle size, about sixty years of age, white-haired and fresh-complexioned, well-built, and active for his age, still an adept at all sports, and encouraging their practice in every man, woman, or child, whom he could convert to his theory. He believed that nothing in the world equalled fox-hunting—that in it was inherent every virtue; above all others, truth and courage. In fact, he scarcely believed in their existence apart from it. So far did he carry his principle, that when compelled to admit that the bishop of the diocese was an honest man and a gentleman, he always asserted that the bishop was a sportsman by disposition and taste, and only prevented by the peculiar circumstances of his case from subscribing largely to the county hounds. All his sons were taught to regard hunting, shooting, and fishing as equivalent to Sir William Curt s's three Rs in point of utility, and far beyond them in every other respect.

There was always a stable full of horses and ponies, down to the rough Exmoor of the youngest boy, who was now, however, about fifteen, and promoted to a clever, well-bred animal, fourteen hands and a half high, with considerable pretensions as a hunter. Once every year, on a particular holiday Sunday, it was this gentleman's practice to send to Dr. Gresham's for a detachment of schoolboys, whose known propensities had rendered them friends of young Thoroughgoods, or favourites of the squire: and the course of proceeding was in accordance with the old gentleman's notions of what was right. The holiday Sunday extended from Friday night until Monday morning at 10 A.M., at which time every boy was expected to be again in school. Excuses were unknown; distance was no apology; illness alone constituted anything like a valid reason for absence. Saturday was therefore the day *par excellence*, and Mr. Thoroughgood took care that it should be a pleasant one.

On the present occasion, as heretofore, the grand climax was a boys' steeplechase. Considering that Mr. Thoroughgood was a country gentleman, and neither a dealer nor a proprietor

of a travelling circus, things looked pretty favourable for sport. There were three good hunting galloways in the establishment, which, without being in racing condition, were quite capable of galloping two or three miles over a country, with a proper weight on them; and two more had been sent from a dealer's stable in the neighbourhood, not quite so fit to go, but no bad conveyances for a couple of schoolboys, whose purses and stomachs would be none the lighter if they did come in half a field behind the rest. Besides, there was always the chance of a tumble; and each, confident in his own skill, as long as his pony was certain to jump, would have taken any sort of odds that came within the bounds of possibility. On Friday afternoon, accordingly, Mr. Thoroughgood's phaeton, licensed on great occasions to carry six little men, the groom, and five schoolboys, conveyed a tolerably noisy party from the school-gates to the Cliff, where the hospitable squire, with a son or two on either side, was waiting to welcome his juvenile guests.

"Now, boys, be off to your rooms: dinner, sharp, in half an hour," and out came boys and carpet bags with an equal celerity.

"Mind that bag," said Dacre, "there's a pot of patent blacking for my black boots."

"Now then, stupid," said Wilkinson to another, "don't sit upon that—you'll crush my tops:" whilst Charlie Thornhill, quite awake to the emergency, collared his own property, and was soon mounting towards his bedroom, leaving his comrades to follow, which they soon did. Every one had a cutting whip, and two out of the five had to open their bags with a penknife, having left their keys behind.

Dinner passed off as such dinners must. It was evidently a bye-day. There was plenty to eat and drink, and a bottle or two of champagne enlivened the conversation of the youngsters; but it was manifest that the serious business of the meeting was deferred, in every respect, till the morrow. One thing Charlie heard, and which somehow gave him a new interest in the proceedings: the Misses Dacre were staying in the neighbourhood, and his curiosity would be gratified, as they were to be of the squire's party for the day. The surprise did not seem to affect Teddy Dacre to an equal extent, who had some misgivings on the score of his horsemanship,

and did not appreciate feminine badinage, of which he was pretty certain to fall in for his share. A very jovial game at whist, in which each told his partner pretty plainly the state of his hand before playing, and in which there was none of the villainous retrospection of the game so common amongst amateurs, but in the present case quite beyond the limited powers of the party, closed the evening; and Wilkinson, retiring early to look at his breeches, which had been fabricated from a pair of white moleskin trousers for the occasion, and Teddy Dacre to polish his boots with the very best patent French varnish, which could not be trusted to any hands but his own, the party broke up and retired to rest.

Mornings always shine brightly upon schoolboys when there's no particular reason for the contrary. To-day nobody could have seen a cloud. It was early spring; and March was for the present enacting the lamb. Every one of the five had been out of bed before daybreak to see what sort of a day it was likely to be; and each had returned to bed fully persuaded that it was sure to rain, until the light gray morning eased their minds of that anxiety.

"Come in," said Thornhill, as a knock came to the door. "What in the world do you want, Teddy?" and the misty outline of Master Edward Dacre, in a white shirt with black arms, made its appearance in Thornhill's room. "It can't be time to get up yet."

"Well, I don't think it is, quite," said the other, as he nervously twitched up a pair of drawers, and sat down at the foot of the bed. "Do you know these colours of mine are uncommonly cold? I don't think shirt sleeves are quite the thing for the middle of March."

"But you'll soon be warm enough if you should happen not to get into the brook, which George Thoroughgood says is quite full of water: the governor's delighted, because he says there's no danger of broken backs. If you are not hot enough, put a couple of Jerseys underneath. But why didn't you borrow some colours? you could easily have got them. I had some sent to me from Turner, Sir Frederick Marston's trainer, as soon as I got scent of the thing."

"How does it look, Charlie; not very bad, does it?"

"Bad! not at all. You're quite a swell com-

pared to Russell. He's sewed two scarlet sleeves on to a black cloth waistcoat. It has a very sporting look before, not quite up to the mark behind."

"I wish to goodness I could get off riding, Charlie." Here Charlie sat bolt upright in bed in thorough bewilderment. "My sister Edith does chaff so, you can't think. I wonder whether George Thoroughgood would let me off, and ride for me?"

"Bless your innocent heart, my dear boy; he can't ride the weight by two stone. Besides, what would the Squire say? It isn't honest, Teddy: 'pon my word it isn't."

"I don't see that."

"Why, you came here, and ate your dinner, and brought your traps, and you've made your shirt into a sort of Prussian sentry-box, and you're going to breakfast; and of course all that's the same thing as entering for it. It's deceiving the Squire. You are such a shifty bird, Teddy; and all because you're afraid of a woman." And here the speaker curled himself up again, and gave a grunt indicative of fatigue.

"Yes; and so would you be afraid if you knew her."

"I don't know about that," said Charlie, with some few misgivings on the subject; "but I know this, she wouldn't put me off from such a jolly lark as we're going to have to-day. Why, there are two-and-thirty fences, lots of timber, a double post and rails, and the brook, as I told you before, quite full of water. Only just fancy!" And it was a lovely picture, certainly; but Teddy Dacre did not seem to take so cheerful a view of it in his shirt and drawers, as Charlie Thornhill from underneath the bed-clothes.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STEEPLE-CHASE.

"Teach the youth tales of fight, and grace
His earliest feat of field or chase."
Lady of the Lake, c. vi. 11.

"HERE they come at last," said old Thoroughgood, pretty nearly tired of waiting for his breakfast, as the clock struck a quarter past nine, one full quarter of an hour beyond his usual time. The old gentleman might have been justifiably vexed at the delay, and with any other person would have been so; but a schoolboy was to him what a tortoiseshell cat is to Aunt Tabitha — it breaks nothing, it steals nothing, it inconveniences no one, it can do no wrong.

"I beg you a thousand pardons, sir," said our hero, walking shyly into the breakfast room; "I really was so tired." And here we may remark that the pleasure of lying in bed constitutes one of the supreme blessings of a schoolboy's

holiday. He has no idea, while at school, of any pleasures which necessitate the ordinary rules of rising. Ten minutes may do, a quarter of an hour may do, but half an hour is better to break the delusion of the chapel bell. On the morning in question it is but fair to lay no such dereliction to their charge. They were all of them up, all of them had performed their ablutions in good time; but the encasing themselves in their new and heterogeneous costumes was a service of considerable uncertainty, and involved, in most cases, some ingenious contrivances. Large trousers had to be drawn into tight breeches; narrow boots had to encircle wide-spreading pantaloons. The long had to be made short and the short long. There were as many button-hooks at one time as there were buttons. The assistance of the valet was *selon les règles;* but, we can scarcely recount the fact without blushing, that, from the old housekeeper down to the very youngest, the kitchen-maid, every one of them had a finger in the pie. Refractory tops came up too high, and spread themselves widely, "but not too well," about the calves that should have been, or perchance now are. Equally obstinate breeches

refused the meeting. Each seemed to have stepped into another's shoes, whether they fitted or not; and the fitness of things depended, for the first time, upon the length of an elder brother. Before long, however, they had all followed Charlie Thornhill, and were passed in review before Squire Thoroughgood and his sons, whose curiosity had been roused to see whether the devices for steeple-chasing costume were more or less ingenious than those of previous years. They proved to be nearly upon a par with those of their predecessors. Charlie, indeed, by the addition of an extra pair of woollen stockings, made an appearance not unworthy of his sporting reputation; and the harlequin jacket he had borrowed, with its black cap, though a little tight across the shoulders, pre-eminently qualified him for taking the lead. Wilkinson came next in order and in weight, and, as far as his purple and orange jacket was concerned, presented a very tolerable figure; but having hired his tops of the postboy at "The Dragon of Wantley," at a moment's notice, his legs had a melodramatic appearance between Charles II. and a French Jacobin. Dacre's shirt was

declared to be an admirable substitute for the white and black family colours, which it was intended to represent: and with his Wellington boots, which had been varnished to a turn from bottom to top, and coaxed to meet a rather shrunken pair of leathers, the only ones in the party, gave him a not unflattering resemblance to a magpie. Billy Russell, or "The Honourable William," as he was called, made the most of a rather limited wardrobe: he had the black cloth waistcoat and scarlet sleeves already noticed, and had deliberately thrust into a pair of top-boots of antiquated form his white-cord trousers, on to which a pretty housemaid, bribed by half a crown and a kiss, had been employed for half an hour in sewing mother-of-pearl buttons, to give an appearance of reality, which was only available at long distances. Whilst the light-weight of the party, little Tommy Bosville, in the most correct of breeches and boots, with his black jacket and cap, was hailed by universal acclamation as the swell. Very neat, indeed, he looked; and if Tommy's pluck had only equalled his elegance, there can be no mistake as to who would have been the winner on that

day. He was the only one of the lot who felt that he was *quite* the thing, and he commenced breakfast with a corresponding appetite. Very few men eat well who have a suspicion of their toilet, especially on a hunting morning. Boys are less susceptible of these *desagrémens*. But their attention was not a little diverted from the hung beef, hot rolls, devilled kidneys, and split fowl, by the singularity of their costume.

"Now, young gentlemen, time's up," said the Squire, trotting into the billiard room, in woollen cord breeches and top-boots, with his neat broad-skirted black coat and white neckcloth, looking the picture of an old-fashioned sportsman. "Let us be off to the stable-yard: I suppose you know your mounts. Thornhill is to have the little bay horse Solomon; he's a capital fencer, and able to carry a little more weight. Then Wilkinson had better ride the gray pony Kitty; that's a good mount."

"She ought to win, sir," said Captain Thoroughgood, who lounged into the yard with one of his brothers, smoking a cigar. The captain was a great man amongst the boys, as all cavalry officers were before the universal adoption

of a moustache and beard destroyed the most attractive distinction of the service. "Who's going to ride Judy?"

"I, sir," said Russell, as he looked with an undaunted air at the labours of the pretty housemaid, and wondered whether the yokels would be taken in by the imitation. "I, sir. She'll go into the water, won't she?"

"Into it? Not she, if you ride her at it. Who told you that?"

"Thornhill said she didn't look as if she liked water any more than I did."

"Oh! never mind him, he's only been chaffing you; he wants to win himself, and he thinks that will funk you. You ride her straight; she can jump better than anything here, except Solomon, and he's not so fast as the mare. But come, get up; here's Dacre on the chestnut pony, shirt-sleeves and all," added he, as that worthy emerged from a stable door ready mounted, followed by the swell, leading a clever little roan mare that had been sent up from the dealer's to participate in the day's sport.

At the head of the cavalcade, and surrounded by neighbouring farmers and tenants, with his

own sons and guests, rode the cheerful little Squire. Happiness glowed in every feature, not only at the pleasure he was giving to others, but in anticipation of the fun he was preparing for himself, for the giving a pleasure is no diminution of one's own; and he almost broke out into a laugh. The gentlemen riders, each on his own crack, followed in due order, and the whole was closed by such an assemblage of stablemen, helpers, and privileged labourers and servants, under the conduct of Mr. Gates, the stud-groom, as would have gladdened the eyes of a border knight on the advent of a speculative foray. Half an hour's gentle riding brought them all to a farm of Mr. Thoroughgood's, where about two miles and a half of a steeple-chase course had been marked out by flags, so as to render the line as unmistakable as could be. The honest historian is bound to record the fact, that a certain compromise had been entered into with the fences themselves, so as to put them all within reasonable chance of negotiation, and in accordance with the presumed inexperience of the performers.

The Squire loved to see a tumble or two, and

thought falling gracefully one of the first accomplishments of a good horseman; but he had no idea of having the sunset of his life clouded, or his pillow haunted by the ghost of a young gentleman of sixteen or seventeen years of age, with his trousers inserted into his Wellington boots, and a bloodstained waistcoat with particoloured sleeves of a size to match. So the stiff timber was taken out, and the strongest blackthorns were laid a little low; and though the water was left wide enough for any juvenile glutton, it was carefully selected with a sound bottom, and not more than four feet in depth, so that the ducking might be complete without the necessity for the drags of the Humane Society. Another hour was spent in looking over the course and other preliminaries, including that downright idleness which is always the concomitant of immense official bustle, and eminently indicative of amateur racing. By this time the course and the starting-post presented a tolerably lively scene, notwithstanding the privacy of the proceedings; and half a dozen county carriages, with a few flys, a mail phaeton, and several gentlemen on horseback, served to stimulate the

nerves of the competitors, if a clear conscience and a schoolboy's stomach ever require such stimulant at all. Having taken off their great coats, and performed their preliminary canter, without which no truly sporting effect can be produced, even Teddy Dacre forgot the thinness of his shirt-sleeves, and Master Bosville the size of the brook so eloquently described by Charlie Thornhill. We are obliged to admit that enthusiasm carried that young gentleman a little beyond strict bounds, for so truthful a person, though we think he deceived himself quite as much as other people. Bosville, indeed, confident in the correctness of his get-up, and Billy Russell, regardless of the deficiencies of his own, took a nearer view of the bright eyes that were to recompense their exertions later in the day. But Charlie, naturally shy, and tossed between curiosity to see one face and an innate consciousness of absurdity mixed with the proceedings, kept aloof from the crowd of carriages till an awful knell, in the sound of a bell for preparation, smote upon his ear.

"Now, gentlemen, take your places, if you please," said the jolly Squire; "the captain's

gone to the winning-post with Gates; here are three volunteers going as umpires, and there's Joey Sanders, the keeper, down at the brook, with a gaff to help out those that require his assistance. Never mind your breeches, Russell; they'll fit capitally before long, I know: they only want damping. Now, are you ready? When I drop the flag, and say 'Go!' you must go: and the devil take the hindmost: 'Occupet extremum scabies.' You see I haven't forgotten my Greek, you young rascals. Go!" And away they went, Billy Russell on Judy, with a lead a little stronger than he liked.

Whenever I find it desirable to write a run, it shall not be two miles and a half, and the performers shall not be schoolboys. I have a fancy for rivalling Nimrod, or at least for approaching that standard of excellence. Neither shall I draw upon imagination for incidents. There is more of the marvellous in reality than in much fiction: and why not in the hunting-field as in the world? Like passions are at work; like faults and like excellences have their natural results. Even a big fence in getting away is like adversity in early life, it

strengthens where it does not kill. What are the successful efforts composed of?—patience, courage, judgment. What comes to early grief, and puts us *hors de combat* at once, or leaves us vainly struggling behind?—unsubstantial confidence, rashness, or equally unsubstantial fear. What carries us half through the run, and then leaves us sticking, after a successful start, in miserable failure?—too much pace, the loose reins of self-indulgence, wrong turns, and losing sight of our object; or some beast of a rival, with a little more running in him, jumps on the top of us at the earliest opportunity, and extinguishes our hopes and our breath together.

But while I write thus, we lose time. Already three or four fences have been safely negotiated without a fall. The harlequin jacket is not very forward, having been a little outpaced by the resolute Judy, who by great good fortune had the sturdy little Billy Russell on her back. Beyond an irresistible jerk at the first fence, which pulled him on to the shoulders, and made his nose bleed, he was going pretty smoothly still to the fore. Teddy Dacre, too, was after him on the chesnut, and the swell—ignominious

position!—brought up the rear. Wilkinson and Charlie were close together, playing at real jockeys remarkably well. Of course this amicable state of affairs was not likely to last, and a few fences further on, little Bosville spoilt the elegance of his costume by tumbling over the roan pony's head at a post and rail: whilst the Honourable Russell still led, sitting a little nearer the horns than usual. At the next fence Judy ducked her head, landing Billy on his back in the ditch, whilst she jumped over him, and resumed the running on her own account. "Now then, Russell, you get out of the way, blocking up the gaps," said Teddy Dacre, who came next, and was really beginning to feel at home. "You be hanged," said Master Russell, who was now up and standing in the fence, ready for an argument, "there's lots of room for you, only you're in a funk." The dispute was ended by Charlie making a fresh hole. In the meantime the ponies were caught straightway by the numerous touts and hangers on, and restored to their owners, who were soon up and after their comrades. The cheerful little sallies which took place during the ride, especially at the fences,

where little casualties happened, were quite refreshing, and robbed the rivalry of all sting. "Go it, Magpie," said one; "don't chirp too soon," as Teddy Dacre cut a genteel summersault over a blackthorn. "Now then, Boots—well done!" said another, as Wilkinson landed side by side with Charlie in a muddy ditch, out of which, however, they managed to scramble without any inconvenience beyond the necessity of remounting: and giving occasion to the other three to make up for lost time, which they did somewhat at the expense of their ponies. And now comes the water. Two-thirds of the course had been accomplished; and it was not till they had turned to come home that this formidable obstacle presented itself. Teddy Dacre was the only one of the party that had any experience in drowning, and he had no fancy for a repetition. Charlie fully believed in a ducking, but never despaired of anything. Rather negative feelings actuated Wilkinson, and little Bosville shut his eyes mentally and physically to the danger. As to Billy Russell, he had not long become a voluntary agent, and scarcely realised the situation, but he made no doubt about getting over,

if he could but sit on. They all charged it, however, manfully: Charlie got over with a fall, Solomon over-jumping himself: the grey refused, and blundered in and out again upon a second effort. Teddy Dacre turned on all his steam, and, though pretty nearly off the shop board, went on with the lead. Judy, a little blown by previous exertions, landed Billy well into the water, who, as he was crawling out, was pulled back again a little unexpectedly by Tommy Bosville. The swell, when he saw the water, lost his nerve; and the roan mare, shooting suddenly round in the wake of Russell, alarmed at the melancholy failure of that hero, sent her rider flying over her shoulders right into the middle of the stream. He was but small; and not coming immediately to the bottom, he thought self-preservation, the first law of nature, should be obeyed. He saw no tails to a coat, but he saw a boot to a leg and seized it. Had it been but Wilkinson, the boot would have come off: the Honourable William's refused to give way, and they both fell back comfortably into the brook to find their own level. We need hardly say that when they found themselves safe within

their depth, they felt strongly inclined to quarrel then and there: and had it not been for the momentary absence of Russell, who had dived to the bottom in search of his whip, it would probably have ended in a fight on the spot. Luckily, the attention of both was called to the business in hand by Joey Sanders, who threatened to commence operations with his gaff, unless the young gents came out of the water, instead of standing there "a disturbin' of the fish." His remonstrances, and the mighty weapon he wielded, had the desired effect: but the length of their controversy had put them out of the race. Dacre continued to lead; and the Magpie on the chestnut pony was becoming a strong favourite with the multitude. He had the foot of Solomon; but being a little nearer to dealers' condition, and not in such constant work as the Thoroughgood stable, there was still the ghost of a chance for Charlie. One more fence, and the run in: and with a laudable zeal for the ladies, who had transferred themselves to the winning post by a short cut through a couple of gates from the start, the Squire had taken care that it should be a jump. Already Alice and Edith

Dacre looked upon their brother as the victor. Already Teddy Dacre felt himself secure of the prize. Already Wilkinson had declined, and Charlie began to think further perseverance useless, when the chestnut pony, which had hitherto been going well, declined the last fence, and Solomon, pricking his ears, and answering to a somewhat emphatic kick from Charlie, cleared the hurdles and furze-bushes, and landed the "Dunce of the Family" a winner by some lengths. The grey mare, Kitty, was a tolerable second ; and after considerable persuasion the chestnut hung his hind legs in such an ignominious manner that Teddy was compelled to dismount before he could be released. At an interval of a minute or two the missing competitors, Russell and Bosville, trotted up the course, still discussing in somewhat animated language by whose fault it was that they were both of them wet through.

CHAPTER XV.

A DINNER AND ITS AGRÉMENS.

"separat hoc nos
——— a grege brutorum."—*Juv.* xv.

THERE is no idea in the range of social life so beautiful as that of sisterhood. A single girl may remind us in her severity, if she be severe, of a Greek drama; if she be gentle, of a weeping willow. But two sisters are never too dignified for every-day life, never too pliant. There is a golden cord of mutual obligation which unites them. They borrow and pay back one another's beauties; and the reflection of a sister's excellences make those of each more attractive. That is why old Lady Trumpcard never knows which it is that young Scraptoft means to marry. How should she? He never knows himself. I do not know that this peculiarity extends beyond two. I rather think not. But unless two suitors present themselves about the same time, and

each claims his victim at once, it is very likely to be a long game at haphazard: and even then they have been known to change by almost mutual consent.

When Charlie Thornhill sat down to dinner at old Mr. Thoroughgood's, he saw around him a heterogeneous mass of excellent people; fast young women with palsied mothers, and slow young women with dashing chaperones; unpolished country squires, boorish in appearance; *empressés* in manner, with red hands and large feet—the former of which they were continually polishing with their pocket-handkerchiefs, whilst the latter reposed in uncomfortable inelegance beneath their chairs. It was just as impossible to overlook Dacre's sisters, in such an assembly, as to have overlooked the moon amongst the planets. They gave light where there would have been nothing but eating and drinking. Charlie Thornhill was a shy boy, naturally: he felt himself rather the hero of the day, which made him more shy: he was very susceptible, too, which shy persons not unfrequently are: and he was of that age when the other sex have a vast superiority over ours. He found himself

next to the one sister, and nearly opposite to the other. From some peculiar cause, assignable to mesmerism or satanic influence, as I suppose Mr. Close of Cheltenham would say, he was predeterminately attracted towards Edith Dacre. Charlie's indolent mind did not inquire the wherefore. "Blue-eyed and full of chaff" was the limited description he had had of her. Alice was "a stunner," said the same animated *raconteur* of family portraiture; yet when he looked at the black-eyed girl beside him, he involuntarily thought of his brother Tom: Tom, who at that moment was calling mains over a bottle of claret in Lord Carlingford's rooms in Peckwater.

It is just possible that the short description of these girls, by their brother Teddy, does not convey much notion of them to the reader. Attend then, whilst I somewhat amplify it. But not too much. Let facts attest their characters.

The soup being gone, Charlie Thornhill took courage to turn round to his left-hand neighbour, as less formidable than the turban and diamonds on his right. The first thing that struck him was the extraordinary smoothness and brilliancy of the coal-black hair. It gave him a mysterious

notion of condition. Then he got to eyes of the same colour, but softened in hue, as though some violet mingled with the black. The other features had no particular expression nor beauty, beyond the mouth, which was somewhat large, but well-formed and humorous, not laughing, but capable of being made to laugh. The figure, which was not at present apparent, was well-formed and large, but carried off by a corresponding presence and height. Charlie felt a little afraid, and much attracted. He knew Alice Dacre to be but a year beyond his own age : but she carried full three summers more in a simple but perfectly assured manner. Yet Alice was a little shy with strangers: perhaps proud. Towards the preserver of her brother's life she felt no pride, and towards schoolboys of seventeen but very little shyness. The great force of her character was in its truth, and even the "Dunce of the Family" felt it at once.

Then he turned his eyes opposite, and through the spring flowers of an épergne he saw his fate. Laughing eyes, soft brown hair, a beautifully-formed nose and mouth, every movement of which was a smile, and displayed the even,

dazzling little teeth within: a complexion almost delicate; but a matchless grace of budding womanhood which set disease at defiance. There was no deficiency of character in the features or form, soft and womanlike as they were. Alice Dacre could be dreamt of as alone, or as giving support where it was wanted; but first impressions of Edith Dacre attached her irresistibly to her sister, or detached her from her home only to entwine her nature with a stronger and more virile stem, that was her only weakness. Boy as he was, he saw nothing to fear, but something to love; and he thought the "chaff" of which Teddy had apprised him would be the most palatable food on which he could fatten.

> "Malo Venusinam, quam te, Cornelia, mater Gracchorum."

A word on the Dacres themselves. Mr. Dacre was a man of high family, great pretension, and but moderate means; and had married a lady whose object in life was to appear in the world as a member of the *beau monde*, of whose usances she was supposed to be perfectly cognisant. They went to the proper places at the proper seasons,

were seen at the proper houses, and were unobtrusive negatives in the world of fashion. He was tall, handsome, well-mannered, and slightly bald. She was stout, dignified, an excellent talker, and richly but darkly dressed. They were both a little above the average in point of brains: but made friends, and preserved them, by a judicious control of their intellects. They had both objects in life. His was to obtain an attachéship for his son; hers to obtain eligible *partis* for her daughters. Alice was out. Edith was still in the schoolroom, if the embroidery of flowers, lessons in water-colours, and tea with Miss Wilkinson, whenever there was company at dinner, could be construed into that locality. They were pronounced by everybody to be a charming family: they were kind to the poor, condescending to their inferiors, tolerably civil to their equals, *obeissant* to their superiors, and distantly recognisant of the curate of the parish in which they lived. It would have been difficult to reconcile the visit of the girls to Mr. Thoroughgood's neighbourhood and table with Mrs. Dacre's doctrines, but for one fact. They were under the charge of a lady whom it was not desirable to

offend. Lady Elizabeth Montagu Mastodon was a great woman, in every sense of the word, and a relative of Mr. Dacre. Montagu Mastodon was member for the county, enormously wealthy, and had no children. Lady Elizabeth was the daughter of an Irish peer, whose estates had been sold under the Act for 300,000*l.*, every shilling of which was long since squandered. She was the stoutest, the vulgarest, the cleverest, and the kindest woman that ever walked, we might say rolled, upon two legs: and if Mr. Montagu Mastodon, with his iron and coal, found the money, she found the popularity for the county member. She went everywhere, did everything, and knew everybody; and hence the appearance of the Misses Dacre at the hospitable board of our old friend Thoroughgood.

"Lor' bless me, Mr. Thoroughgood," said the old lady in her own right, who had become more practical and more vulgar since her marriage, "I wonder you don't kill yourselves with your steeple-chasing. So that's the young gentleman that won to-day? It does you great credit, sir; whatever is done at all ought to be well done. Thornhill, Thornhill—ah! that's his name," said

she, putting up her glass, "is it? His brother's at Christ Church with my scapegrace of a nephew, Carlingford. Do you know what the prize poem is this year?"

"I did hear, but I forget," said Charlie, blushing up to the eyes—"something about the niggers," added he, after a moment's pause.

"What! the Africans, the slaves? Surely they don't call them niggers in a subject for the Newdigate?"

"I think it's the nigger: I know it's about Africa, because my brother wrote to me about it."

"Bless my heart, so it is about Africa; now I recollect: it's the Niger: all about Africa, only not quite in the way you mean, Mr. Thornhill. Bless the boy! what a capital joke."

"Mr. Thornhill," said Alice Dacre, "I am so glad to have had an opportunity of thanking you for your kindness to my brother. Papa and mamma often talk about you. We can never forget it; and they would be so glad if you could come to see us when the holidays begin. We can try and make you comfortable, though I dare say you love Thornhills: only we want to thank you. Do come!"

Charlie began a speech. To his infinite relief, Lady Elizabeth looked at the old maiden cousin who had sat at the top of Mr. Thoroughgood's table since the death of his wife, pushed back her chair, and made preparations for rolling into the drawing-room. Alice rose too; and as she held out her hand, saying, "I think the carriage must be ordered before you leave the dining-room," Charlie almost thought he could have tossed up which of the two it should be.

CHAPTER XVI.

UNCLE HENRY.

"Lerne früh die Kunst Geld zu verdienen."

Time is the steadiest traveller of my acquaintance. He stands still for nobody, and with nobody; and though he always accompanies us, he still goes before, and follows on our heels. Nothing daunts him, nothing turns him aside; and he alone takes for his companion the young, the old, the fast, and the slow, and keeps up with them all. In his presence we learn the inutility of prodigality of efforts. He never hurries, therefore he is always going. His condition is unexceptionable, and he leaves us with a low bow only on the confines of eternity. Men are too apt to ride, walk, eat, drink, fight, and legislate too fast: their efforts are too prodigious; their strength fails; and the quicker they go the sooner they are caught. Not so the prudent man, who learns a lesson from his fellow-traveller. He

despises the vanity of doing this, that, or the other, for the sake of being talked about, for the happiness of creating a nine days' wonder, and making himself uncomfortable for the sake of gratifying the admiration of the vulgar. The same motive which makes one man venture his neck over four feet and a half of stiff timber on a beaten horse, makes another swallow two bottles of claret after a sufficient dinner, or eat fifteen eggs for breakfast. This man exhibits his vanity in driving a steam-engine, in Haymarket revelries, and in marriage with a woman of easy virtue. That man in a fight of an hour and ten minutes with a pugilistic butcher, in riding four-and-twenty horses two hundred miles in eight hours and a half, or in being picked out of a wager-boat half dead after a triumphant struggle with a professional bargee. I do not mean to put the consequences of each upon a par; but the motive which induces this prodigality of exertion is usually the same in all. The wise man eschews excitement. He enjoys his pleasures as he eats his dinner. He enters upon life as upon a journey, which may be long and troublesome, and may require plenty of husbanding of strength for

a successful issue. He waits upon his competitors in the race: he looks, like Time, a bit of a laggard, as if he were being left behind. But they begin to come back, and he perseveres with his steady pace, and wins with some pounds in hand.

"Wisely and slow: they stumble that run fast."

There's no mirror so honest as your contemporary's face. I look in the glass, and believe myself to be my own junior by about a couple of lustres. I look at my boots and breeches; they are essentially the same that I have worn these twenty years. They look so, and I firmly believe them. I walk as far and as fast through the stubbles of my friends, I ride the same class of horse, with——no, let me be honest, not with quite the same nerve; but I am still far removed from "a funker." I can even drink port wine in a land where no port is, but a vile compound of black grapes, logwood, and molasses, without a bilious headache, or the want of an extra cup of tea. All this assures me I am young. I look in the glass, as I said before; I see no grey hairs on my head nor in my whiskers—thank Heaven!

I do not wear a beard; nor do I remark the slightest, not even the most respectable tendency to corpulency. This is as it should be. I am still young in my own estimation, and only 11st. 7lb.—a perfect godsend to an establishment the proprietor of which is a 13st. man, and always mounted just up to his weight. But when I go out to dinner, I go in fear and trembling, lest the truth should be brought home to me. "Smith," says our host, "you remember Jones of St. Dirtiface; you were the same year." I look up, and I see a huge mass of hair, which seems as if it had been gathered on the top of Mont Blanc. Jones's eyes, once rather large and prominent, have sunk, abashed at their former iniquities, into their sockets, his neckcloth is voluminous, his voice going down hill, and his awful waistcoat displays dimensions which I remember formerly as belonging only to sexagenarians. And this man was at the University with me! Do I look anything like that? Of course not. But there are twenty ways of growing old, and it is quite clear that, to know one's self, one should keep up an acquaintance with one's contemporaries.

And all these monstrous buckram men in armour have grown out of one poor truth—that Time had not stood still with Charlie Thornhill.

The London season had already begun. Tom Thornhill had just taken his degree, and paid ten thousand pounds to the great fœnerator of the day, a most respectable firm at the West End, and one which might have papered its offices with post obits. He was in town, and in great force, surrounded by bloodsuckers and lickspittles, preserving, however, the valuable reputation of being neither a fool nor a blackguard for the present. He was saved, just yet, from utter reprobation by the appearance in public of his friend Lord Carlingford, one of the richest noblemen in England, and who offered so brilliant a bait, and so safe a one, that Tom Thornhill was only to be regarded as a *pis aller*. Sir Frederick and Lady Marston were at their own house, as usual, in Grosvenor Square, he for his parliamentary duties, she for her amusement; and in their train came Charlie Thornhill, who always found a ready welcome with his father's oldest friends.

Lady Marston, a great reader, was in the

library, Charlie was gone for a ride. Sir Frederick came into the room, and seated himself not far from his wife, with the paper in his hand.

"Have you seen the paper this morning, Kate?"

"No; not to-day. Who is to be the new Bishop of ——? I do hope we shall have learning or character."

"If you mean, by learning, a critical knowledge of the Greek article, and capability for editing a Greek play, I think we could do without the first: and I do not think any of the reverend bench can be said to fail in the latter."

"Humph!" said Lady Marston. "Cæsar's wife should be without suspicion; and that's more than can be said for all your venerable diocesans. As to the learning, classical knowledge is better than none; and it was an evidence of great capability, you must acknowledge, my dear Frederick. I own I liked your Monks and your Butlers, and I do not think you have bettered them. But what was your news?"

"That miserable blockhead Feltham has married an outrageous woman with half a dozen

aliases, after settling more than half his income upon her, and placing it at her own disposal; and old General Feltham, his uncle, with the rest of his family, has a commission of lunacy sitting to inquire whether he is capable of taking care of himself and the Feltham estates, to which the old general and his family are the heirs presumptive."

"But he is not mad any more than you are. He is vicious and foolish, but perfectly responsible for his actions, and consequently for the use of his property."

"It's a very bad case, however, Kate; and though legally capable, he is morally incapable of directing himself or his affairs. He'll be a beggar before another five years is over his head."

"Very probably, if the lawyers leave him anything to spend. But the family ought to have found that out before he disgraced himself and them by such a marriage. And if he spends everything now, the general will have the less to regret the loss of. Are you very busy?"

"No, Kate. What is it?"

"Charlie Thornhill."

"Ah! that troubles me, my wife. What's to be done?"

"Tell him the truth, the whole truth."

"The whole truth is not mine to tell. Besides, it's not a certainty, and may come all right again. The Irish property bought of Kildonald is now represented by the four thousand pounds which has been returned, the sale never having been completed. And although I cannot but suspect some rascality, the money certainly did not go through his banker nor his man of business."

"His banker was his brother, and he would not perhaps wish him to know; but I am satisfied the sale was completed."

"The matter was arranged by a Mr. Burke, a lawyer in Cork, who acted for both parties. Poor Geoffrey was not only so little a man of business, but so culpably negligent in all matters connected with money, excepting the paying of his debts of honour, that neither I nor his brother can make anything of it."

"And from what you tell me, I am to conclude that there is but little probability of Charlie

ever having more than this pittance until his mother's death. However, he is not an absolute pauper, and he must have a profession." Here Lady Marston subsided into a fit of quiet thoughtfulness; it had a tinge of melancholy in it, as thoughtfulness for other people ought to have: destiny is a sad subject of contemplation at the best of times. At last she raised her head with a more cheerful look, and said, "Can I go to Pall Mall in the carriage to-day, Frederick?"

"Certainly, my dear. Why should you ask?"

"Because I wish to see Henry Thornhill; and as it is on Charlie's account, I want to know whether you disapprove."

"By no means; but I fear you can do but little to mend matters."

"We shall see; and if the worst comes to the worst, Charlie must make a fortune. After all, it is the more honourable course of the two."

It was a fine sunshiny afternoon when Lady Marston turned into Piccadilly out of Berkeley Square on her way to Pall Mall. Her equipage was faultless, her bonnet was charming, and she ought to have been the happiest woman in

London. Indeed she was very nearly so, for she had a well-balanced mind, which shook off light sorrows like "dewdrops from the lion's mane," as long as they only affected herself. She was unfortunate in having a heart which the highest cultivation in that respect, had always kept alive to other people's requirements. When this is the case in the world of fashion (and there's quite as much feeling there as amongst the virtuous middle classes) there is usually plenty of exercise to keep the hand in. Her present object was a visit to Henry Thornhill, to see what could be done for the future advantage of the unconscious Charlie. That amiable youth at that very moment was making some scientific examination of a rather high-priced hunter, with a view to a first season on his own account, and wondering how far judicious summering would bring round a rather questionable leg. St. James's Street was alive with dandies. Old General Bosville bowed, after the fashion of Carlton House, from the steps of his club. What wonderful preservation! thought Lady Marston. Then she stopped for a moment to speak to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs,

who thought they must go out if Sir John Plumper pressed his motion. The lady was not below politics nor above point-lace. A very comprehensive mind was Lady Marston's. At the bottom of the street she caught sight of Carlingford and Tom Thornhill, with two or three more of their set, staring at Mr. Dighton's middle-aged dandies in Sams's window. She looked into the future, and the sibyl sighed, for she saw a long array of lost talent, misspent time and a "sowing to the whirlwind;" and she thought of Geoffrey Thornhill as she first knew him—not so young as that, but very like it. Within half a minute the barouche drew up at the dingy banking-house of Hammerton and Thornhill.

Lady Marston's was a carriage. Not a brougham, with an active coachman accustomed to drive a pair of horses, and weighing only 10st. 6lb., and a cockaded flunkey in a demi-livery. Hers was a carriage, with a fine round, dignified coachman, well-powdered and silk-stockinged, who had never been asked to drive east of Temple Bar on the one side, or west of Kensington Gore on the other, and her footman was six feet two, and carried a stick with the air of

a drum-major. The sensation created at the Guards' Club was not slight, and the young gentlemen at the Oxford and Cambridge were nearly frantic with curiosity. In the meantime Henry Thornhill had himself appeared to her summons, and leisurely handed the sweetest woman in London into the very dingiest of back parlours.

Lady Marston had sufficient tact to know that time was more valuable to the banker than to her, and she was scarcely comfortably ensconced in a leather-cased chair before she proceeded to business.

"Have you seen your nephew lately, Mr. Thornhill?"

"Which, Lady Marston? for I have two."

"Charlie, I mean," said the lady.

"Indeed I have not. I wish I saw more of him."

"He's in very good company."

"If he's with you, Lady Marston," said the banker, who never paid a compliment. A disappointment in early life had shaken his faith in woman. He saw the woman who was plighted to him walk up the steps of St. George's Church on the arm of her father, and return down them

in half an hour on the arm of a wealthy earl. He knew she had been cruelly tortured, sorely driven, but he never forgave her, though he would have shed his heart's blood to save her from pain. His sense of truth forbade him to excuse her falsehood. His love taught him to suffer in silence for her, but his sense of justice condemned the sacrifice. He saw her almost daily in his solitary ride or walk from Pall Mall to Bryanston Square, but her constancy and well-known trials pleaded unsuccessfully for her sex.

"He is with us: Frederick is very fond of him, and we are anxious to see what can be done for him. This unexpected hitch about the Kildonald property, which we imagined was his, makes his case different from what it was a year ago. He must have a profession."

"He must, indeed." And the banker seemed to think it was the best thing for him. He crossed his foot upon his knee, and looked at Lady Marston.

"Have you no advice to offer on the subject? With your experience, I think you might assist him. What say you to mercantile life?"

"Has he any taste for it? Does he care for

drudgery, toil, uncertainty, loss of caste, change of companionship, and a thousand little trials, of which he has no idea." The banker was getting hard, as he thought what had sent him into the back parlour of a bank instead of into country fields and pleasant places.

"What he may have a taste for, I do not know; but I have thought of your own profession."

"Mine is a trade, Lady Marston; more respectable, it is true, than many professions."

"And more lucrative."

"That's as it may be. But let me be sincere with you—as sincere as I can be on this point. He may go into my business, but into my house of business he never can come. There are reasons, insuperable reasons; and you know well, that if I thought I could serve him so, he might command me. But why not try something else—the army?"

"An ensigncy in a marching regiment is all to which he could aspire. But I think he should be consulted himself; he is old enough, at least, to have an inclination. What are his prospects?"

This was scarcely intended for a question, for Lady Marston, though truthful and earnest, was

refined in mind. The banker, however, understood her cue, and, without apparent embarrassment, answered—

"His mother's jointure, when she dies, and, for the present, the money received from the uncompleted purchase."

"And that is all? The prospective advantages are distant."

"They are. But he shall never want a home while I live. And Charlie seems to have no lack of friends, if all I hear of your own kindness and Sir Frederick's be true. But he will never do for business."

"You are wrong, Mr. Thornhill. He is ignorant, and idle, in the sense of learning; but he has high principles, common sense, and much determination. I should have thought he would have done admirably in your own——"

"Trade, Lady Marston. Possibly: but I think not. You have great influence with him; and the influence which is exercised by such as you upon a young man of his age, is the strongest and most valuable coadjutor he can have in any career. Give him my kind love, and do all you can to impress upon him the value of independence.

It will raise him in his own estimation as well as others', for it will place him above them; and no man knows what four-and-twenty hours may bring forth. Believe me, Lady Marston, if he wants to enjoy a fortune really, he ought to make one."

There was an end of the discussion. A few minutes devoted, as usual, to the weather, the chances of the present ministry, the educational scheme, and Lord Shaftesbury and his bishops, finished the conference; and with the same courtesy, and a cheek a little flushed, Henry Thornhill shook hands with Lady Marston, and heard her last order given, "To Howell and James's," with a sense of relief.

The banker was old for his years. Circumstances had made him so. English funds, and a contemplation of French rentes, American repudiation, and foreign politics, make a young man old, though I believe they keep a middle-aged man in excellent preservation. Like medicine, they should only be taken after a certain time, and as a remedy against something worse. Henry Thornhill had taken to them as an anodyne, and found his account in them. The battle of life

is to the strong; but if the strong be beaten down, he must be raised by powerful stimulants. No one ever knew why he was not in parliament. He knew himself. The mephitic vapours of political intrigue and dependence rendered the air of St. Stephen's less palatable to the honest banker than to most men. He liked the life he led. He was unostentatious to a degree. One or two horses, a plain chariot which he seldom used, a good club dinner when alone, which was seldom, and an autumnal excursion into Scotland or Norfolk, to Homburg or Vienna, where he looked at a life with considerable amusement, of which, however, he was no participator. He had loved a woman; since then he had learned to love work, and the dingy parlour at the back of those spacious premises in Pall Mall. He could give advice, even to Lady Marston, without offence. The accidents of his life, and his position, gave him an authority beyond his years. No one knew what was locked up in him; for he never exposed for sale more than what he knew to be marketable. His memories, his sadness, the sturdy bachelor kept to himself; his experiences and his advice only for the friends, like Lady

Marston, or his nephews, to whom he thought they were acceptable. He discovered a close acquaintance with the world, when he spoke of the influence exercised by a woman, like Lady Marston, upon a young man. It has a charm, a flattery in it, quite unequalled by any other friendship; it softens, it consoles, it ennobles, and it cherishes the dying embers of a spirit of chivalry, the characteristic of a bygone age. The old cock so tough in the evening was tender enough in the morning. "Faisant la cour aux poules."

CHAPTER XVII.

GRILLED BONES.

'Alea, Scylla vorax, species certissima furti
Non contenta *bonis* animum, quoque perfida mergit.'

When Lady Marston reached home, she found a note from her *protégé*, excusing himself from dining in Grosvenor Square, as he was wont to do when engaged elsewhere. It rather disconcerted her plan, as she was dining at home alone, while Sir Frederick was at the House, expressly for the purpose of talking to Charlie. It would have been an excellent opportunity for a chat about his prospects, and for urging the adoption of a profession of some kind or other. His uncle's reserve on the subject of his own intentions created a vague alarm, which was confirmed by her previous conversation with her husband. As, however, it was pretty certain that that young gentleman would make his appearance only to dress, and the subject was not one to be discussed

in a five minutes' conversation on a second-floor landing-place, she wisely determined upon postponing the business indefinitely. There could be no doubt about an opportunity occurring within a week or two at latest, notwithstanding the multifarious engagements of a London season. So she took her drive, and her dinner, and listened to Grisi for an hour or two, chatted sociably with half a dozen dandies, who amused her, and with one clever man whom she amused, and returned comfortably to bed at a reasonable hour.

Whilst she had been talking to the worthy banker, Charlie had been spending his morning less profitably. Exactly opposite Cambridge House, he had been overtaken by his father's old acquaintance, Lord Dorrington, who hailed him with that good-humoured simplicity which is so flattering from eight lustres to four.

"Where now, Charlie?" said the jolly nobleman, who, beyond a tight boot (physically) and a twinge of '34 claret, knew no trouble, "going my way?"

Of course he was, or any other way that suited him; an idler or a more accommodating young man than Charlie Thornhill was not, at that

time, to be met with; he had not even a pleasure in prospect to bore him. It was not long before he had confided to Lord Dorrington his intention of going to Scotland in the autumn, and from there accompanying Tom to Melton, unless his brother should take to the hounds in his own country; an improbable thing for the next three or four years, as they were just now in the hands of a young nobleman, who might be expected to last that time at least, though not much beyond it.

"I must have two or three horses of my own, for Tom's such a good fellow, that if I don't buy one or two, he'll be increasing his number, and there's no necessity for that."

"There's a horse of Putney's at Tattersall's now, that would pay for summering, and that would just suit you; he's fast, and a capital fencer, but wants a little riding, which I hear you can do for him."

Charlie blushed; but he knew Lord Dorrington to be a good judge, and Captain Putney (when I first introduced him, he was only a cornet) to be a straight man over a country. So he sauntered on to the corner of Park Lane,

where he took courage to say that he would go to Tattersall's and look at him.

Having made up his mind that the "Ironmaster" (so called from his late owner) would be cheap enough at 120 guineas, he walked once more along Piccadilly till he reached Bolton Street. After hesitating a moment, he knocked at a gloomy-looking door, whose portals opened at the summons into a more gloomy-looking hall.

"Is Lord Carlingford at home?"

"No, sir," said the man; "but Mr. Thornhill and Sir George Barrington are just come in, so that I dare say his Lordship will not be long."

"Sir George Barrington," said Charlie, half aloud, "then I'll go up."

At the same time a groom of the chambers appeared, and Charlie followed him along hollow-sounding passages to a room on the ground floor. Nothing could present a greater contrast to the darkness of the passage he had quitted than the light and comfort of the room into which he was shown. It was a billiard-room of very large size, made comfortable by the light from above, and by all the appendages which modern taste requires. There were books, pictures, arm-chairs, and sofas

of every description. Sir George was chalking his cue, preparatory to a stroke, and Tom Thornhill was lighting a cigar, at the moment that his brother entered. Both stopped in their avocations for a minute, and welcomed our hero with the greatest cordiality. Sir George was not a favourite of Charlie's, and he viewed his present occupation with considerable distrust. He knew him to be a gambler; alas! he knew one very near and dear to him to be one too. But he knew him to be unprincipled, ungenerous, and licentious; living without means, save such as he filched from his unsuspicious victims, and this at the rate of some thousands a year. He was admitted into, or rather tolerated in, society; but mothers shuddered when they heard of him as the associate of their sons. He was an adept at all games of skill, and report said, a still greater adept at games of chance. But he was a first-rate pistol-shot; had already killed his man in a not very creditable fray; and it was pleasanter to say it of him, than to his face. As to Tom Thornhill, he would as soon have believed in his want of honour, as in his own. Charlie took a different view of the case.

The game proceeded; one hundred up. Thornhill had made a good break, and left off within ten points of the game. "I can take three hundred to one," said Sir George, who was about five-and-twenty behind, with a bad break. "I'll lay it," said Tom Thornhill. And certainly it looked like a good bet. Here Sir George cursed his luck, chalked his cue, and threw away his cigar. He made a difficult following cannon, which brought the balls together; and immediately after ran up the game to ninety all. His own ball was over the middle pocket, the red ball in baulk. Sir George's break of twenty-five had reduced the betting to evens, with Tom Thornhill for choice. He made six by holeing his own ball off his adversary in the middle pocket three times, but unfortunately brought his adversary back into baulk, thus leaving himself nothing on the table. Sir George then made the game. Tom looked disappointed; not at the loss of the money, but the game. He was easily persuaded that luck was against him, and put on his coat with a reassurance that he could have won. Charlie had watched the game narrowly, and knew better.

"Au revoir," said Barrington, as he took his leave; "I shall not wait for Carlingford." And the brothers were alone.

"What do you do to-night, Charlie?"

"Nothing particular. I was going back to dine at the Marstons'; they're alone to-night, and I can please myself."

"Then come down to Richmond, and dine with me. Here comes Carlingford; he or I will drive you down. There will be only ourselves, De Beauvoir, the Punter, and Barrington.

Lord Carlingford entered the room. He looked like a gentleman, but strength of mind was not his characteristic.

"What did you do with Barrington?—How do, Thornhill?" added he, seeing Charlie.

"Lost, when I was a red hazard off the game."

Charlie hesitated a moment, and as suddenly consented to make one of the dinner-party.

"Well, then, I'll call for you in Grosvenor Square at half-past five." And Charlie took leave for the present.

As he strolled slowly along Piccadilly towards Bond Street, his thoughts employed on his brother Tom, who was his *beau idéal* of every perfection

in man, he ran against one of those profound busybodies, who love to astonish boys with their *savoir vivre*, and acquaintance with the *on dits* of society. Frank Tuftenham was five years Charlie's senior, was a clerk in the Foreign Office, had a bowing and scraping acquaintance with everybody, and was intimate with nobody. He was a small, intrusive sort of man, and though a small brilliant is worth a whole dust-heap, Charlie Thornhill was a giant in every respect to the sallow-looking official, as he called himself.

"Weren't you at school with Dacre, Thornhill?"

"What, Teddy Dacre? Of course I was. I should like to see Teddy again; I haven't seen him this year or more. Where is he?"

"He's in Town. I thought you knew them very well; he always talks about you to everybody. But what a pity it is that pretty sister of his is going to be married to that fool De Beauvoir."

Charlie felt rather uncomfortable; and though Tuftenham was perfectly unconscious, he could not help thinking that he was looking at his rising colour. The fact is, he was red hot to the roots of

the hair; and old Thoroughgood's dinner had inflicted a wound a great deal more lasting than the headache he rose with on the following morning. Still Charlie could not shake him off. His conversation had the power of a basilisk; there was no escape, though the poor fellow felt that it was death to stop. This was a skinning he had hardly bargained for; for if ever a young gentleman of twenty years of age had allowed concealment, like a worm, and so forth, it was Charlie. Between ourselves, he was very much in love indeed, for an absentee. Then his agreeable friend continued, "I do hope there's nothing in that report that's going the round of the clubs about Sir George Barrington and your brother!"

"What the devil's that?" said Charlie, with considerable energy.

"Oh! I beg ten thousand pardons—I ought never to have said a word: of course I concluded that you had heard all about it."

"Not I; let's have it."

"Well, they do say that Barrington has won five thousand of him, and two of Carlingford. Of course I only repeat what I have heard."

"I don't believe a word of it." But Charlie

painfully recalled the game at billiards of the morning. "Do you know Barrington?"

"Rob a church, I should think," was the official's reply. "About the greatest swindler in London. Adieu, Thornhill!"

Charlie Thornhill's reflections were sombre, as he sauntered up Bond Street towards Grosvenor Square: he began to think there was something of truth in the *on dits* of the day: and as he determined that the De Beauvoir engagement was well founded, he could not altogether disbelieve the one about Tom and Sir George Barrington. "He is a thief," said Charlie to himself; "I was sure of it."

The drive down to Richmond was cheerful enough in itself. The charming spirits of Tom Thornhill, the quick-stepping ponies—a new purchase of Tom's—the clanking of the pole chains, the sparkling river with its hundred boats, and hearts as light as its waters, the budding verdure, and the fresh air, all combined to drive away the gloomy spirits of Charlie. He could not help remarking on the way down, however, to his brother, that he didn't like Barrington.

"I know that, Charlie."

"How?"

"You're always so infernally polite to him, when *we* can scarcely get a civil word out of you."

"I mean to be so: they don't speak highly of him."

"Poor devil!—I suppose he's lots of enemies, like everybody else who hasn't money enough to buy a good opinion."

"He might have laid out some of his late gains, then, advantageously; he ought to be pretty flush."

"I suppose some fool or other has been exaggerating the case, Charlie. A few hundreds aren't much for a fellow that's been plucked as he has." Tom was getting a little warm in his friend's cause, so Charlie reserved any communications he might have for another opportunity: and a few more minutes brought them to the Castle.

"Lord Carlingford come yet?"

"No, sir, but his lordship's room is ready," replied the obsequious waiter, with a flourish of his napkin. "Dinner at seven, sir."

"Come, Charlie, let's go into the garden, and look at the boats," and in another minute they were lounging over the wall. The gardens were gay with fashionable men and well-dressed women, who strolled up and down, or sat on the wall, or occupied the seats scattered about. It was a pleasant scene enough; that lovely river, and the life that sparkled on and around it. It makes young men forget, and old men remember: it's a glorious place to moralise.

There's old Brownwigg, I wonder what he's regretting: his past life, probably, and that it can't come over again, as he smokes his cheroot under the shadow of those cool dining-rooms, which only remind me of the infernal regions in ice; and look at Henry Careless; it's true he is meditating, with folded arms and leaden heart, upon his eighteen thousand a year reduced in as many years to as many hundreds: but it is only that he might have it again to spend twice as fast. It is strewed with regrets, that Castle garden, but not with regrets of the right sort.

In the meantime the guests had arrived, and Tom and his brother turned back to welcome them.

Lord Carlingford was chewing a tooth pick, from which he seemed to derive considerable satisfaction, if not nourishment; even that exertion was almost too much for him after his drive. De Beauvoir and Sir George Barrington had come down together. The former presented an object of much interest to Charlie since the morning; and he was compelled to admit, that if he was a fool he was a very good-looking one: his companion looked as *blasé* and washed out as any other naturally delicate gentleman who has lived upon nothing but excitement up to the age of thirty. The Punter was a roystering, jovial, natural sort of person, of about five-and-twenty —very large, very stout, very loud in every way: his name was Cressingham, and he had obtained his sobriquet of Punter from a supposed love for that amusement, rather than from any real predilection for the game: he was not averse to throwing a main when it came in his way, but, with the exception of Charlie, was probably the least fond of play of any of the party. I had almost forgotten to mention two not unimportant items in the list. On a large sofa, enveloped in peach-coloured silk and muslin, with a corre-

sponding amount of point-lace and jewellery, sat two pretty women: the elder of the two was known by the name of "the Peeress." She was just now pouting and affecting great disgust that her particular favourite, Major Nuggett of the Plungers, had not been invited. The other lady, Mrs. De Beauvoir, was indulging in anticipations of dinner, a very favourite pastime with her: she was younger and fairer than her companion, and declared her inability to talk at present. "Lor' bless us, Sir George, don't bother so. Who's to do anything until we've had something to eat?"

The Peeress, *née* Mary Armstrong, had been elevated to the peerage from widowhood, after an alliance, offensive and defensive, with a wealthy stockbroker called Simpson: Mrs. De Beauvoir had been formerly bedchamber woman to the Hen and Chickens at Birmingham, under the name of Sally Jones, and took her first step towards her present elevation through a celebrated tinman of her adopted town. I am naturally loth to introduce these ladies to the notice of my readers, but the novelist deals with society as he finds it, and Truth is stronger than Decorum.

If we except one little oath which slipped out of the Peeress's mouth by accident, and two glasses too much of champagne on the part of the other lady, their conduct was unexceptionable: and so we may take our leave of them, merely adding, that with some difficulty they were persuaded to order their brougham at ten o'clock, instead of continuing to gamble for half-sovereigns with a couple of dinner knives at the Castle.

I am compelled to state, with regret, that the dinner was not up to the mark. The Punter was the only person who felt really aggrieved: his jolly nature always attached itself to the present, and he was an excellent judge of what he thought good. The rest were scarcely competent to decide upon the delicacies of a French carte, not so common then as now: and certainly Barrington had come to Richmond with other views than the mere accident of a dinner. The champagne was guiltless of the province or banks of the Marne, and the claret had to be twice changed before it was pronounced drinkable.

The conversation at a Richmond dinner is not always worth preservation: the evening passed

cheerfully enough, if not very rationally: Charlie never talked much; he probably, like the parrot, thought the more. He could not help looking at Barrington with a shade of suspicion; but before dinner was over it gave place to a pleasanter feeling, and he began to think that he might be mistaken, and that Tuftenham was but a gossip at the best of times. He was not *au fait* at all the subjects discussed, for Charlie almost despised the life he was obliged to lead some part of the year, and felt more at home in the Warren at Thornhills, and with his four-footed favourites, than in the middle of St. James's Street, amongst the fashionable acquaintance of his brother Tom. To tell the truth, he had quite brains enough to despise the empty-headed, and to feel his own deficiencies amongst those who were worthy of better things. The next Derby, and the last fight, will not last for ever as topics of conversation. The Opera, and the Oxford and Cambridge boat-race had their turn. Carlingford's shooting and Tom's new hack did good service. By the time they had arrived at the Chiswick fête, and the gentlemen and the players, most of the company was anxious for some more engaging

excitement; and when Tom proposed a game at hazard, which he was quite certain to do sooner or later, no one but Charlie regretted it, and certainly no one said him nay.

Why are we all gamblers—North and South, East and West; the most civilized, the most savage? The Malay, who runs a-muck, after everything in the world that he has, excepting his clothing, which may be considered *nil*, is gone. The Frenchman or the Englishman, who, in running a-muck, loses his everything—reputation and honour not unfrequently included. The former literally becomes the prey of his acquaintance, and goes forth like a wild beast to kill or to be killed. The latter having stood to be shot at, takes his turn in victimizing his friends. The having been the loser of many thousands seems to be an excuse or apology for every enormity. Our friend did it, because he has been done. The Russian lights a fire at his heart, which burns as fiercely as the South American: and whilst the latter washes out his losses in the blood of his opponent, the former scatters his own brains upon the steps of the Kursaal at Wiesbaden or Homburg. Tom, Tom, would that a

warning might come in time! thinks Charlie: there is a flaw in his idol, but it is none the less an idol for that.

So down they sit, and the rest look on. The gladiators of old afforded a game which destroyed the combatants, and the grave old Romans looked on and applauded: but then they were their slaves or their enemies. The fine old Briton will watch with interest a game which destroys his friends or foes. They begin with hazard. "Seven!" said Tom; "eleven!"—the nick, and he wins. He throws in a few mains, and wins a hundred, taking the odds. His blood is warm by the time he has thrown crabs, and is out. "Five!" says Lord Carlingford. "Seven to five!" cries Sir George Barrington; and five it is. "Pass the box, Carlingford. Charlie?" "No, thank you," said Charlie. "I'll look on; I never play:" and they respect the scruples of a younger son. Besides, it is so much better, for "he's not over sharp, you know, and would certainly fall asleep in the middle of it. I think that would be the time to shave his eyebrows." He's not asleep now. Before long the luck began to change, and, like a true gambler, Tom Thorn-

hill clung to ill-luck with considerable perseverance.

"More claret, waiter, and light those lamps on the mantel-piece," said his lordship. "De Beauvoir, what have you won?"

"A couple of hundred only," said the fool, the *fiancé*, the blindfold goose at Christmas amongst the Swabian girls. "Barrington is the winner."

And so he was. And Tom continued to take the odds, and to bet them, as Barrington called "Five!" and threw seven. "Eight mains! why, you'd break a bank." And Tom got more and more excited, and displayed an eagerness from which Charlie boded no good for that night. "Let's have a bone and a glass of champagne;" and up came the gooseberry, this time *bien frappé*, not before it was appreciated by one of the party at least. Tom began to feel feverish; Lord Carlingford was limper than usual, and not disposed to risk any more money on himself or Tom Thornhill, whom he had been backing; De Beauvoir decided upon going; and the Punter was fast asleep on a sofa with six new ten-pound notes in his pocket, which he had won and

pocketed in the most jovial manner, without any regard to the pocket out of which it had come. The grilled bones and champagne, however, so far revived the party that Tom, who vowed he he would have nothing more to do with the dice five minutes before, now proposed a game at écarté as a compromise between his conscience and his desire for play.

"Come, De Beauvoir, one game for a pony."

"Impossible, Tom, I must be off; there's my horse catching cold underneath that confounded portico all this time."

"I'll take a hand," said Lord Carlingford.

"And I," said Cressingham.

Barrington said nothing, but took the cards and a seat. His face was flushed with triumph; he looked confidant, as well he might; to continue was only the gamester's principle of backing his luck: écarté with such men as Tom Thornhill and Carlingford was Sir George's promised land in possession.

Again the play was fast and furious. Tom began to hold cards. He got back some of his money from Carlingford, and would have recovered some of the ill-gotten gains of the

baronet, who, however, was always ready to lay or take the odds, and by some combination of talent brought off the majority of his ventures. The king seemed obsequious for so great a person. Time wore on, and Cressingham was again upon the sofa, having lost a trifle, and the peer had already sent for soda water and the bill. Still Tom played on, cursing his fortune and doubling his stakes, till the sum became serious. Charlie in the mean time had not been asleep. He was not given to admiring himself, but in the feverish silence of the two players and the drowsy stupidity of the non-combatants had taken refuge in the mirror, which surmounted the mantelpiece, and which was at the back of Sir George Barrington's chair. His attention was divided between his own well-parted hair and a china shepherdess of the reign of George II., which formed one of the ornaments of the chimney-piece, when he saw, what he had never seen in polite society before, the hand of Sir George Barrington secrete a card in the tail pocket of his dress coat, out of which peeped the corner of his cambric pocket-handkerchief. Charlie's first impulse was to proclaim the fact; but Charlie

was a thinker as well as a man of action, and determined upon waiting. Again he turned his attention to the game. Tom won: the stakes had been lowered. Again Tom won: and again the stakes were raised. Sir George looked at his watch.

"Come, Thornhill, we must finish; one more game."

What's to become of the card? thought Charlie.

The game proceeded.

"Cards?"

"If you please."

"How many?"

"Toute la boutique."

"The king," said Tom, who had taken to smoking, and emitted a volume of vapour. Charlie had also lighted a cigar, and stood on the right hand of Sir George, a short distance from the table, apparently wishing that Tom and he were in the phaeton again. Still the game proceeded slowly.

"The trick," said Barrington: "two to your one."

Again Tom scored.

"Even," said the Punter, with an ill-suppressed yawn.

Two deals followed in Tom's favour, and again he laid two to one. The next hand was held by Tom; and the baronet held the king, and made the trick.

"Even again, by Jove! your odds look badly, Tom," said the Punter, as he rose, and proceeded to uncork a soda-water bottle.

The time must be come, thought Charlie, who sucked at his cigar as if nothing extraordinary was about to happen, but edged a little further round towards Sir George's right.

"You've laid me two hundred to one on the game, as a finish," said he to Thornhill, who was no longer so collected as in the earlier part of the game, and chafed a little at the unexpected turn of the game. "You've laid me two hundred to one; I'll lay it you off even now, if you like, Thornhill: it's four all." The hands lay on the table.

"Done!" said Tom.

The baronet suddenly stood in need of his handkerchief before turning the trump. Holding then the pack in his left hand, he put his right hand behind his back, and drew out a perfectly

scented and elaborately marked French cambric, as innocent of deceit, to all appearance, as the wooden horse of the Greeks. His hand had barely reached his hip, however, when with one stride and the quickness of lightning his wrist was seized as in a vice by the right hand of Charlie and the back of his collar by the left hand of the same apathetic individual. A violent struggle ensued of a second's duration, in which the lamp fell to the ground, calling Lord Carlingford's attention from his bill, and shooting the bottle of soda-water all over the Punter's shirt-front.

"Charlie, you're mad!" said Tom.

"What the devil's the matter?" said Cressingham, coming to the rescue.

"Bring the light here, or bring us to the light: here's foul play here. It's no use, Sir George," said Charlie. "I've not watched you to-night for nothing," as Barrington struggled fiercely in the grasp of one of the most powerful fellows in town. "It's no use: I'll have the card that's in your hand, if I tear you limb from limb."

"Speak, Barrington. What in the world is it?" at last said Lord Carlingford.

"I've no card in my hand; the man's drunk or mad."

"No, he's dropped it: his foot's upon it. Pick it up, Tom."

The Punter saved him the trouble. "By G——, sir, it's the king of clubs!"

The announcement restored four of the party to their equanimity, the fifth stood pale, trembling, and discomposed. Lord Carlingford was quite himself again as he said, with the politest of bows, "Perhaps, Sir George, you had better order your carriage; mine will be round in a minute or two." Barrington was gone.

The termination to the night's amusement was abrupt enough, though none too soon. The waiter announced Lord Carlingford's carriage and Mr. Thornhill's phaeton in a few minutes, during which not one of the party referred to the transaction, excepting by an epithet not complimentary to the absent guest, backed by a very strong expletive. They had already left the room, when Charlie returned for a glove that was left behind. The light was still in the room, and as he entered, between the door and the table at which the struggle had taken place he

trod upon something hard and sharp. As he moved his foot he stooped to ascertain the cause, and found a die.

"Waiter," said Charlie to that functionary, "does this belong to you?"

"No, sir; I've just put two pair by that the gentlemen have been using this evening."

"Look again."

"Yes, sir, they're all right: they belong to the board, sir."

"Very good. You're quite certain——. I thought I heard something drop." And he put the die carefully into his waistcoat pocket. "Good night."

"Good night, sir," said the waiter. In three-quarters of an hour he was in Grosvenor Square.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TWO BREAKFASTS.

"Falsely luxurious, will not man awake,
And springing from the bed of sloth, enjoy
The cool, the fragrant, and the silent hour."

THOMSON—*Seasons.*

ON the morning following the little dinner at Richmond, which had ended not so pleasantly as it had begun, Charlie Thornhill was not up so early as usual. He was an early riser on ordinary occasions, and had that happy peculiarity of allowing nothing to interfere with his usual habits. On the present occasion he was a little late. He had an idea that the less said about the previous evening's occupation to Lady Marston or Sir Frederick the better. She was apt to ask inconvenient questions, and Charlie was a bad dissembler; so he kept out of the way.

Having delayed his shaving, which was, however, *très peu de chose*, as long as he could, and having taken extraordinary care in the selection

of the articles of apparel for the morning, a thing he was generally careless about, he reached the breakfast-room some time after Lady Marston had left it, and Sir Frederick was gone to his club. His appetite was remarkably good, as sound, indeed, as his sleep had been, a thing which only lasts to about the age of thirty, and he rang with intense satisfaction for more eggs, and another roll or two: and—"Jobson, just bring in the ham if there is any left; the one we had at dinner the day before yesterday." Charlie was a first-rate judge of ham.

"Certainly, sir," said Jobson, as he placed a fresh-boiled egg in front of the late comer, and laid the "Times" on an approximate chair. At the same time he poured out a cup of tea, and presented it. Jobson was an excellent servant, and as careful of his master's friends as of his master himself.

Charlie had just broken the crown of his second egg, and was wishing the cutlets were made hot again, when a cabriolet stopped with a jerk at the door, and a loud and prolonged knock proclaimed a fashionable arrival thus early in the day. The breakfast-room door was not quite

closed, and an impatient, imperious voice was heard outside, "Is Mr. Thornhill at home?"

"This is Sir Frederick Marston's, sir," said the footman; "Mr. *Charles* Thornhill is staying here: he is at breakfast at present."

"Take that card to him and say I will wait."

"Will you walk into the library, sir?" said the servant, as he preceded the owner of the quiet but well-appointed equipage which had turned the corner when he knocked at the door.

"A gentleman wishing to see you, sir," said the servant, presenting the card on a waiter.

"Captain Charteris, 8th Hussars," read Charlie. "Ask if he is sure it is not my brother whom he wishes to see?" Charlie had heard of Captain Charteris, but had no more idea of the purport of his visit to him, than if he had been announced as the Emperor of China.

"Captain Charteris believes he has made no mistake, sir, and if you will allow him to wait until you can see him, a few words of explanation is all he wishes."

"Is that Captain Charteris's message?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then 'ask him to walk in here, if he will excuse ceremony."

Captain Charteris did walk in, without ceremony. He was a good-looking but dissipated man, some years Charlie's senior, dressed to perfection, and bearing evident marks of good birth and the habits of good society. Charlie apologized for the lateness of his breakfast, a very unnecessary piece of politeness, as it was far in advance of the Captain's usual hour for that meal, and he yawned accordingly. He had been obliged to call thus early in consequence of the peculiar nature of his business. Charlie was more in the dark than ever.

"Excuse me, Captain Charteris; are you sure that it is not intended for my brother? if so, he is in Grosvenor Place, I believe." Charlie was not anxious to hear what might be intended for Tom's private edification.

"I think I am under no mistake. May I ask if you were not at a dinner yesterday at Richmond? Sir George Barrington was one of the party." A light dawned upon Thornhill; yet he never could be such a fool, thought he, as to send the man here.

"I was there, with my brother, Lord Carlingford, and some other gentlemen. Sir George Barrington was one of the party."

"Then, Mr. Thornhill, if I say that I come from him, you can be under no misapprehension as to the nature of my visit."

"Indeed, Captain Charteris, I am sorry to ask you to explain yourself, for I can hardly believe that Sir George can have asked you to call upon me for an apology or an explanation."

"I thank you very much for saving me an unpleasant task; it is the very purport of my visit this morning; but I am charged with no request for an apology, but for the name of a friend who may arrange a more satisfactory meeting at once. Personal violence admits of no explanation."

"You are Sir George Barrington's friend?"

"I am."

"You know him well?"

"I think I do."

"Excuse my saying, Captain Charteris, that you do not, or you would not be here this morning. I don't know much about these matters, though I suppose one always fights with

gentlemen. I certainly don't intend to fight Sir George Barrington."

"Stay, Mr. Thornhill, I think I said Sir George was a personal friend of mine. I can allow no such insinuations against——"

"I insinuate nothing; I state a bare fact: and though I give no explanation to Sir George, I admit one is due to you;" and here Charlie helped himself to an additional lump of sugar, and rang the bell.

Captain Charteris's brow grew dark, and he pushed up the fingers of his right-hand glove, as if he itched for a hair-trigger: he awaited in silence further communication. In the mean time the butler answered the bell.

"Send up to my dressing-room for a small paper parcel that the groom brought back from Bond Street an hour ago. I detected Sir George Barrington in a gross act of cheating at cards last night, when playing with my brother—a card secreted in his pocket, and proving to be a 'king' at a rather interesting point of the game."

"That," said Captain Charteris, rising from his seat, "has been already satisfactorily explained to me."

"I regret to say that it has to be satisfactorily explained to others, as well, before any gentleman can consent to meet him." At this moment a servant entered with the small packet, and gave it to Thornhill. "Do me the favour to unfold that paper, I have already seen its contents." The Captain deliberately undid the packet, and somewhat to his surprise discovered, under many folds, a loaded die broken in two, in a most artistic manner. "In the scuffle that took place that die dropped from Sir George's pocket. I was so unfortunate as to find it,"—here a loud knock announced another visitor—"I sent it this morning to be broken by Lady Marston's jeweller."

"Lord Carlingford," said the servant, throwing open the door, and that gentleman stepped languidly into the room. "Ah, Charteris! I heard you were here, or coming here, and I have followed you. Thornhill can't fight him; the thing's impossible." Here the peer threw himself into an arm-chair, and smiled grimly. "I suppose you know all about it?"

"I know it all now," said the Captain, "and have to apologise myself; curse his impudence:

to make me a catspaw in such an affair as this: a cursed——"

"Swindler, you would say. You're right: now drive me back to St. James's Street, that's a good fellow, and——"

"Wait a minute, Lord Carlingford, you don't know all"—and here Charlie supplied the requisite information about the dice. "Now, Captain Charteris, I must ask a favour of you. Keep this to yourself: if Sir George Barrington is out of England in four-and-twenty hours, I, for one, will say nothing of this part of the business, and I think I can ask the same of Lord Carlingford, and the men who were with us last night. But if I ever hear of his playing with any man in this country again, it shall follow him into every club-house in London. There's no necessity for further scandal: we are all well out of it. Some of us lost our ready money: he won't be bold enough to present his paper when he knows the termination of this interview." Here Charlie finished his cup of tea; it was the longest consecutive speech he had ever made. He was a man of action rather than of words.

As when a peacock, rejoicing in the sunshine,

spreads his tail to the beams, and struts imperiously before the spectator, so had Captain Charteris disported himself in behalf of his friend; but as when some dark and unsuspected cloud dims the lustre of his pride, the same bird drops his feathers, and drags them on the ground, so did the gallant Captain retire from the scene of his discomfiture; not, however, without a friendly greeting to our hero did he leave the room, followed by Lord Carlingford; whilst Charlie rang the bell, and intimated his wants in the monosyllabic words "the door."

In the course of the day Sir George Barrington received an intimation in such plain terms that he would neither be paid nor shot at, that he took the advice of his friends and left England never to return. In the course of a few days it was all over the west end of London, as the "greatest secret possible," "not to be mentioned on any account," with every malversation, exaggeration, and addition that many-tongued Rumour delights in, and without which the world would be very stale, flat, and unprofitable in the eyes of its devotees.

Some little time after this, when the season

was on the wane, and people were beginning to make those pleasant little arrangements for the autumn which is to be regarded as a rest from the fatigues of a London summer, Mr. Dacre stood looking on to the dusty leaves and parched flowers of Bryanstone Square, where he had taken a good-sized but moderately expensive house for three months. He was waiting somewhat impatiently for his breakfast, as might be seen by the manner in which he measured the difference between his watch and the plain unornamented clock that clicked on the mantelpiece. In a few minutes, however, Mrs. Dacre made her appearance, and rang the bell for the breakfast. At the same time as the urn came Edith, and the three sat down, though two vacant napkins remained unoccupied.

"Now, my dear, let me have some tea as soon as possible, for I am going to be busy this morning; I have to see that bay horse, which Edward wants for the winter, if he's not too much money."

"I beg your pardon, we are so much later here than at Gilsland; and now that the girls are going out it makes a difference to us all; but I

thought you were going to see Lord Tiverton?"

"So I am, after the committee at the House, about the attachéship."

"Lady Tiverton was very gracious last night, and I think if she can do anything for Edward she will."

"She can do nothing in this matter. She manages everybody and everything excepting the foreign policy of the country; and is a most excellent and insincere person, as you know, Isabel, as well as I; but where's Alice?"

"Up stairs, papa, dear; she'll be down directly: she's a little tired with her ball," said Edith, smiling with that happy glow which is the indescribable result of good health, good humour, and the most becoming morning toilette possible. "Here she comes, and Teddy too."

Our old friend Teddy Dacre had become a great swell: he had lately passed an examination, in which it was ascertained that he could spell the words "despatch," "Mediterranean," and a very useful sentence, in which a "pedlar," and a "meddler," played a conspicuous part with a "medlar:" and "ecstasy," and "extacy,"

were placed before him to test the effects of fifteen years of Latin and Greek derivations, sapphics, alcaics, elegiacs, and Greek iambics. Having passed this ordeal satisfactorily, with the one exception of spelling "achievement" "hatchment," he held up his head amongst the butterflies, late grubs, who lounged at Limmer's, the Clarendon, and Long's; who played at Pratt's, and betted at Tattersall's; who rode on high-stepping hacks in the Park, and on neat ponies at Newmarket; who threw away time and money at Poole's, Carlin's, Anderson's, and Howell and James's; who passed their days in smoking and idleness, and their nights in the doorways of dowagers, and in the smiles of beauty; or in the effervescence of champagne suppers, and a wit as sparkling as it was delusive. Every one wondered how Teddy Dacre managed it — how the earthen pot swam among the brazen vessels. Gilsland was nursing, for Dacre was an only son; and though not large, certain; and Lady Elizabeth Montagu Mastodon was his godmamma. What a comfort is such a christening to truly pious parents! And now the fling was nearly over.

Lord Tiverton was about to make an attaché to Berne, in Switzerland.

Alice walked steadily, almost gravely to her father, and kissed his forehead; and then to her mother, to whom she paid the same compliment on the cheek, saying at the same time: "I beg your pardon for being late. I see breakfast is half over, but I was tired with the ball."

"How you can ever be tired, Alice, dear," said her sister, "I can't think. You have all the best partners, wherever you go, all night long."

"Perhaps that's the reason, Edith," said Mr. Dacre.

"I'm sure I could dance for ever if I could get such men as Alice has."

"Who do you mean, dear?"

"Oh! I don't know, if you don't," said the charming girl, and eyes, and mouth, and light-brown hair, and every limb laughed, to the tips of her rosy fingers.

"Who did you dance with, come, tell us, Alice?" said mamma, who, perhaps, had some better reason for asking, than mere curiosity.

Alice put up her head, and smiled only with her eyes. She blushed very slightly. 'Well, then, mamma, I danced with Lord Claremont."

"That was kind of him, particularly with so many old women who wanted partners." Mrs. Dacre had no mercy on mediæval Terpsichoreans.

"Lord Claremont likes me; and he knows I prefer middle-aged men."

"We know you always say so, Alice," said her sister. "Tell us some of the young ones; surely they were not all on the shady side of forty?"

"Mr. Sullivan, Captain Charteris, Lord Carlingford."

"Carlingford!" said Teddy, "what did he talk about? I like Carlingford."

"So do I; but his conversation was not interesting enough to carry much away; it was very like your own: then there was Charlie Thornhill."

"He's a misogynist," said Teddy Dacre.

"My goodness, Teddy!" said Edith, "what a dreadful name: oh, I know what you mean; one

of those horrid animals before the Flood, that Professor Owen talks about."

"There were not so many before the Flood as since; a misogynist, Edith, is a woman-hater," said Mr. Dacre.

"Then I'm sure Charlie Thornhill is not that," said Alice, with the slightest possible look at her sister, who didn't bear the scrutiny well.

"Go on with the list, Alice."

"You keep on interrupting one so: then came George Verulam, who waltzes beautifully; the man they call the Punter, I don't know his name: Baron Nathan Goldstick, Barclay Smythe, and three or four more: I really can't go through the whole of them."

"Wasn't Mr. Thornhill one? I saw him dancing with you, Alice."

"Yes, he was;" and after a moment's hesitation, she added, "I like Mr. Thornhill, he's so cheerful, and so very natural."

"Is that uncommon, Alice?"

"Extremely so, sir," said she, turning her handsome eyes on her father: "the men give us but little credit for brains, or are sadly deficient

themselves: now you know why I like middle-aged men, papa. Do you know Mr. Thornhill?"

"Yes he's coming this winter for a week to Gilsland from Melton, or wherever his horses are. He wishes to see our side of the country. Where are you going, Edward, to-day?"

"To Greenwich, sir, to dinner. The teams are going out, and I am going with Wilson Graves."

"What a pity! It's Chiswick fête, and Alice and I are going with Lady Elizabeth," said Edith, "there will be nobody there." What an elastic sort of word is "nobody;" it comprehends upon occasion four-fifths of the people in England.

"I don't think Wilson Graves is a very good companion for you, Edward. I'm told he plays, and very high. I could forgive almost anything but gambling."

"I don't see how I can get off now," said Teddy, who was unable to defend his friend; "I promised to go down. If you do not wish it, I'll not do so again, but there will be no play to-night—certainly not at Greenwich."

"He was said, some years back, to have been the cause of poor Ludlow's death."

"I never heard the report or the story."

"Perhaps not. Fred Ludlow lost a large fortune gambling. He had determined upon leaving England. His passage was taken for one of the colonies. The remains of his once good property was in his banker's hands; £5000 ready for a start in mercantile life. Wilson Graves met him two days before sailing; rallied him on his determined reformation; ate with him, drank with him, took him to Crockford's; at five o'clock on a summer's morning he walked down the steps of that pandemonium, having given his last cheque to the croupier, with one sovereign in his pocket. A beggar is said to have held out his hat to him (Wilson Graves tells the story), 'Here's a sovereign, my man; I hope it may be of use to you, it's none to me." He was found one hour afterwards by his servant in his arm-chair, having destroyed himself with prussic acid. Few men could have known that, and have played after it. I would rather follow you to your grave, my boy, than out of a gambling-house." It was

a fancy of Mr. Dacre's. He had odd notions of right and wrong for a man of fashion.

Alice listened to her father, on whom she doted. There was an unnatural brightness again in her eyes, but her cheek looked a little sadder and lost its colour. Was she thinking of Teddy's future? It is possible.

Mr. Dacre looked at the bay horse for his son, and did not think him short enough in the leg for a heavy country; he was also a little hot. He had a satisfactory interview with Lord Tiverton, who had not forgotten his promise. He feared Berne was not so pleasant as St. Petersburgh, but it was not so cold, and not so expensive. He had heard a charming account of the Misses Dacre from Lady Tiverton, who was enchanted with them, and would leave cards for them on the first opportunity. Mr. Dacre had forgotten the gambling and was a happy man.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN EARLY STAGE OF THE UNIVERSAL MALADY.

"But you are no such man: you are rather point-device in your accoutrements; as loving yourself, than securing the love of any other."—*As You Like It*, Act III., sc. 2.

Lady Elizabeth arrived in Bryanston Square about 4·30 p.m. to take the girls to Chiswick. We have before said she was good, kind, clever, and vulgar. She never willingly hurt feelings, but she was not quick of perception; and sometimes blundered upon a soft corn. She generally took her foot away, if the patient halloed loud enough, and in doing so gave it a second rub.

"Lor bless me, Edith, what a mountain of muslin you look like! Do you know that my husband is in the carriage? You'll never get into it in that state."

"Don't be alarmed, my dear Lady Elizabeth; I'm naturally small you know; so that I should

really be lost among you all, if I hadn't something on."

"Something, my dear; of course have something. Look at me now: to be sure I'm stout enough; but your head is preposterously small for your body. Where's Alice?"

"Here," said that young lady as she opened the door.

"Now don't you think Edith's petticoats too large, dear: unbecomingly so?" said the old lady in a rather imperious tone of voice.

"No, I don't, Lady Elizabeth; I think she's charming, positively charming. You see if Mr. Mastodon doesn't think so too; I see he's in the carriage."

And she certainly did look lovely. So bright, so cheerful, so full of life and happiness. So the Lady Elizabeth got rolled into the carriage by her stout footman, and Alice and Edith followed, and off they went to Chiswick.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the old lady, when her husband emerged from the mass of muslin and lace which threatened to overwhelm him, "ha, ha, ha! they always do take one another's side; it's no use talking to them. I never expect

girls to see their own faults, but you never see one-another's. Any news from the House, Montague?"

"None whatever; the writ's out for Sittingdean; we want a good practical man or two on our side if we could get them; the young ones are all too full of Greek and Latin, and models of antiquity. What interest is there at Sittingdean?"

"Sir Frederick Marston owns a great part of the property round there; and I think Thornhill has something to do with it. I should be glad to see him in Parliament; it would give him something to do and to think about. He's a fine fellow, I hear, being spoilt by the world."

"He's a desperate gambler, though a man of considerable talent, and the most popular man in his county. Poor Mrs. Thornhill is seldom in town, and a bachelor's house is not the safest place for a man of his temperament. Do you know him?" said the ironmaster to Edith and Alice Dacre.

"We often meet him: his brother saved Edward's life at school:" and Edith told the story: Alice was not very talkative.

On nearing Turnham Green the carriages came thickly, and they were soon in a line of well-dressed people, like themselves. They already recognised some acquaintances. "There go the Capels; those are the new horses."

"Where's your brother, Alice?" said Lady Elizabeth.

"The drags are gone to Greenwich, and Edward is on one of them."

"I'm sorry for it. I hoped we should have seen him. Surely you're mistaken, Alice; the drags are not gone. Here is one of them, and Mr. Thornhill driving," said Lady Elizabeth, as one of the best coaches of the day passed slowly by the side of the carriage, pulling up for a stoppage, however, immediately beyond.

"Talk of the devil," said Mr. Mastodon. "I wish he would start for Sittingdean, or we shall have some Radical or Chartist going down to talk nonsense to those unhappy electors about the rights of the people and universal suffrage. He is a gentleman, and one of the best fellows in England, if report speaks truly."

Alice began to think the old ironmaster wonderfully agreeable; more so than usual.

She hardly knew why. Edith was not quite sure whether his eulogy was intended for the enemy of mankind, whom he had so lately apostrophised, as he had mentioned no name since. In clouds of dust, amidst the prancing and neighings of gaily caparisoned steeds, and in a whole volume of crinoline, kid gloves, parasols, bowings, scrapings, flirtations, heartlessness, and suffocation, Lady Elizabeth, her husband, and Edith and Alice Dacre, alighted from the carriage, and were passed into those gardens which, as a fashionable resort, three times a season, are amongst the things that have been. Did any one ever see the flowers or the fruit at a Chiswick fête? Certainly not. That is, nobody who is anybody. Now I like women, girls especially, who love flowers; and although prize camellias and highly-commended ericas were not altogether the vanity of Lady Elizabeth, she had quite good-nature enough to ask whether they would like to go to the tent.

"Oh, by all means, let us see the flowers first," said Edith Dacre, "we can look at the people afterwards." So they turned towards the tent. Seeing the flowers, however, was not by

any means an easy matter; for as every other person in the grounds had come to be seen or to see somebody else, the stoppages were continual, and the stream set the other way.

"Here comes Smith Ruthven," said Lady Elizabeth, as a good-natured looking man with grey eyes, light hair, and a very dégagé-looking pair of whiskers came towards them, raising his hat as he did so, and getting comfortably wedged in between the Speaker of the House of Commons on one side and Bullock the banker's wife on the other. "Can I be of any assistance to you?" said he good-humouredly; "you look as if you wanted to get to the flowers."

"These young ladies do, Mr. Ruthven; so if you and my husband will go with them, I'll stop and talk to—— oh! here's Mrs. Thornhill; why, it's an age since we've seen you."

"I have been so little in town this season," said the mother of Tom Thornhill, who was a fair, pretty woman, exceedingly well preserved, with the most charming manner, and dressed *à merveille*. "My son, Lady Elizabeth Montagu Mastodon," and Tom was presented in due form.

"I knew your father, sir," said the old lady,

"and I remember dining with your brother, who charmed me by his literary knowledge upon that occasion. I hope he's well."

"Thank you; I believe he is; he's gone to Greenwich to dinner. I wanted him to come here with my mother, but he was engaged."

"More pleasantly," said Mrs. Thornhill; "I and my friend Miss Stanhope were not sufficiently attractive to Charlie."

"You do him injustice, my dear mother," said Tom; "he's gone to take care of an old schoolfellow who, he thinks, stands in need of his help: a friend of yours, Lady Elizabeth, Edward Dacre."

"I'm glad to hear it, for if ever I saw a Telemachus who stood in need of a Mentor, it is that young gentleman," said her ladyship, fanning herself vigorously.

"Who *is* this lovely girl coming this way with Smith Ruthven," said Mrs. Thornhill, putting up a glass and appealing to Lady Elizabeth again.

"That, my dear madam, is Miss Edith Dacre, and that's her sister behind with my husband; they seem to have had a roughish passage

through the crowd. Have you any one standing for Sittingdean, Mr. Thornhill?"

"I've not heard of any one; of course there are always reports. Have you any one you want to recommend, Lady Elizabeth?"

"Nobody fitter than yourself, unless it's your brother, Mr. Thornhill; he looks practical, as if he thought more than he talked. He has had more education than instruction, I imagine, from what I know of him. But here's Smith Ruthven; he's looking for a seat."

"Then he'll look a long time in this crowd," said Mr. Mastodon, coming in for the fag end of the conversation. "I hope you have enjoyed the flowers, Miss Dacre." Smith Ruthven bowed and retreated.

"What I saw of them. It's not the way to enjoy them; and I cannot quite understand the pleasure attaching to their production. Who's that, Mr. Thornhill? There, the unhappy, tearful face looking this way."

"That's Mrs. Smith Ruthven, the author's wife, the man who has just left you. Charming writer he is too; so fresh and vigorous."

"And he always leaves an impression of

goodness; he writes so feelingly, so honestly, so beautifully, so gracefully of women," added Alice.

"Does he?" said Tom Thornhill. "I hardly ——" and here he broke down, when Lady Elizabeth came to the rescue.

"Then it's a pity he doesn't stay at home and practise a little of those virtues. He treats his wife shamefully."

"We don't know how his wife treats him, my dear," said Mr. Mastodon; "there are generally faults on both sides."

"She hasn't character enough to have any faults, excepting those that he has made for her. She was childish and affectionate, she has become sullen or indifferent. Like a child, she could have lived through anything but neglect." So spake the Lady Elizabeth. How right she was! Anything but neglect. Women are made to be our companions, our helpmates; and we pay a greater respect to their feelings when we contradict them, and quarrel with them, than when we turn our backs upon their show of resentment, and exhibit our superiority by carelessness and neglect. It was quite true; Smith

Ruthven was a successful writer; his graceful morality was in everybody's mouth; he was the spoilt pet of a certain society, where sentimentality stood for reputation; at home, he was selfish, and indifferent; never seen in public with his wife; and his infidelities were the theme of universal admiration or excuse.

The gardens were beginning to thin, and gentlemen were busy in looking for carriages. Tom Thornhill went in search of Lady Elizabeth's. That gentleman's acquaintance was very extensive; for, having a taste for almost everything, he was courted by all whose interest or pleasure could be served by knowing him. His progress to the garden gate was frequently interrupted. Lady Hatherleigh must have him at her private theatricals, and was most anxious to put him forcibly down into the vacant seat at once by the side of Emma Hatherleigh, a very pretty girl without a shilling. He had to explain that his mother and Miss Stanhope were under his care in the drag. Captain Blackcock and Fitzroy Livingstone wanted him to fix a day for shooting the pigeon match with Akroyd of the Royals. Sir David Bruce wished for his opinion of a

new Clumber, and little Mrs. Janet Mucklestane caught him just as he imagined himself free of the lot, and insisted upon a promise that he would go down to-morrow morning to look at a charger for her nephew, who wanted, like everybody else, a fourpenny loaf for twopence. At length he found Lady Elizabeth's servants, and then he went in search of his own, who had got the drag into a good place for starting. Having seen the Mastodon party into their carriage, and got seats for his mother and Miss Stanhope, a very excellent but eccentric maiden cousin, who lived as a companion with Mrs. Thornhill, he then had to catch the men who were going back with him; and having accomplished this feat with some delay and difficulty, he at length got on to the box, and went on his way back to London.

Alice and Edith Dacre were delighted with their day's amusement. They were still young enough, and fresh enough, to feel real pleasure at so simple an enjoyment; so they both recounted at dinner the impressions that had been made upon them by their new acquaintances, and declared Lady Elizabeth to be the most charming person alive.

From that day the intimacy between the Thornhills and the Dacres appeared to increase. There was something so genial and so unaffected in Tom Thornhill's manner, so accomplished and so thoroughly gentlemanlike in all he did and said, that he became an equal favourite with Mr. and Mrs. Dacre. Charlie was less confident, less assured in manner than his brother, especially with ladies. He was not so fond of them, and they resented his neglect by calling him a bear. A few knew him better, and encouraged him; and the more they knew him the more they liked him and trusted him. He did nearly the same things as his brother; but he arrived at those results by a different process—Tom from impulse; Charlie with a certain consistency, as from principle. Their affection for each other never varied; and their intimacy with the Dacres was an additional bond of union.

As Tom Thornhill is not the hero of this story, it will not do to give him too prominent a part; he must at least share his pre-eminence with Charlie. As far as he is concerned at present we have before us one of the most extravagant young ones that had been out for some

time. He not only lighted the candle at both ends, but cut it in two in the middle to get more light out of it still. He had a good fortune, notwithstanding poor Geoffrey Thornhill's extravagance; for a long minority had helped to remedy some evils. A few thousands a year are something when a man is satisfied with indulging in hunting at Melton, or buying pictures, or keeping race-horses, or killing two thousand pheasants a season; but they are nothing when he wants to do each of these things, and adds to it a drag, a London season, and an attachment to gambling in every shape or kind whatever. The last item is a sufficiency. Thornhill was not a gamester, but a gambler. Success excited him, loss perfectly maddened him; and they who knew him best prognosticated a short life, and anything but a merry one. United with these faults was a chivalrous generosity, a warm and affectionate heart, great readiness, and some elegant learning, and a simplicity of manner and natural good humour which enchanted everyone. His mother doated upon the very ground he walked on. His county held even the name in veneration; for two generations of Thornhills

had established its merits as country gentlemen, the staunchest preservers of foxes in England: and his brother, who was freer from weaknesses than most people, regarded his very vices with a more tolerant eye than he regarded most people's virtues. Unfortunately, he had a difficulty in saying "no" to himself, a still greater one in saying it to others, which made him err from good-nature against his better judgment. He was very handsome and tall in person, and had the appearance of a finished gentleman, without coxcombry. Is it wonderful that a few weeks of more than ordinary attention, on his part, made a deep impression on Alice, which subsequent events only served to confirm?

The season was drawing towards its close. The ministers were, of necessity, still in town. But the West End began to look thinner, and Goodwood was approaching. The shrubs and trees in the squares and parks looked drier and dustier than ever. Lancaster and Purday had their hands full. Already a keeper or two had been met, hurrying along Pall Mall towards the railway terminus, leading sundry setters, pointers, and retrievers. The whitebait had

grown larger, perceptibly, and nothing remained but a *déjeuner* or two at Twickenham or elsewhere, to which every one was invited, always the herald of departing joys. But one question was ever put to the afternoon lounger, "Where are you going?" and the answer, instead of being to Mrs. Furbelow's, or the Marchioness of Micklegelt, was invariably, "To Homburg," or "Scotland," "the Tyrol," or "the Italian Lakes;" morning calls, excepting as a P.P.C., were at an end; and whole strings of horses were leaving the jobmasters' yards daily. Everything looked like going: the difficulty was to say where. The eligibles had a difficulty in choosing; the detrimentals were not so much puzzled. St. George's, Hanover Square, was open for a particular service daily; not unfrequently by special licence, at 4 p.m.; and two or three bishops were seriously affected by the severe demands upon their time. The band was nearly over in Kensington Gardens; and the metropolitan Elysium of nursery-maids and Life Guardsmen was almost again at their service. The theatres and the opera had long commenced benefit nights, and the last

turn-out of the teams had already been fixed.

Wilson Graves was an unmitigated scamp, but a better whip than the generality of his compeers. He neither started his coach by his leaders, nor screwed them when he had set them going. He had never been known to carry away his bars by a little accident against the gate-post at Goodwood, nor to commit any of those solecisms which too frequently occur in modern days. It is not wonderful, then, that one night late in July he should have returned Charlie safe to Grosvenor Place, after the last of a series of dinners, varying from the Trafalgar, round the suburbs of London, to the Black Dog at Bedfont. "Good night, Charlie," said half a dozen voices, as he jumped down, "see you to-morrow?" "Probably," said he; "good night; that near-side leader would make a hunter." He stood at the door, watching the retreating team, as it went up towards the corner, and smoking the last inch of a very good cigar, which he eventually threw into the gutter. He then knocked at the door of a small but very pretty house, whose balcony, adorned with

flowers, brought the sweets of the country into London, and spoke of woman's care.

"Is my mother gone up stairs yet, Gregson?" said Charlie to the servant.

"No, sir; Mrs. Thornhill is not come home yet. She is gone to the Opera."

"Alone?"

"No, sir; Miss Stanhope went with her. She will be home soon, sir; Mrs. Thornhill is always early on Saturday night. It's only half-past ten yet, sir."

"Then bring me a light; I'll stroll up and down here till the carriage comes."

Charlie lit his cigar, and commenced his walk. But a man cannot walk, and smoke up and down a space of a couple of hundred yards without thinking: so he began to think. His meditations were not satisfactory. He asked himself, who he was? Mr. Thornhill's brother. What he was? An idler, in a false position. What had he? Great expectations, which might be disappointed; and many liabilities, which honest men discharge. What could he do? Literally nothing; yes—stop: ride well over a country, shoot partridges and rabbits to perfection, phea-

sants in cover not so well; drive—certainly; play cricket and tennis, billiards moderately; and—well, it must be admitted, fight a little better than common. What did he know? One language—his own, very imperfectly, but enough to make himself understood; very little Latin, very little French, less Greek; multiplication, but was doubtful about long division and vulgar fractions; the situation of a few places in England, and the capitals of France, Austria, Turkey, and Russia; the habits of some birds and animals, especially the dog and the fox: no history beyond the first seven kings of Rome and William Rufus; an ordinary quadrille, but not the complications of the dance called the Lancers. How did he live? On his mother, his brother, and his friends, who are numerous enough for anything. Had he any good in him? Yes; and this question he answered hesitatingly; his love for Edith Dacre. It stood, for the present, in the place of higher motives, as it frequently does, not as their substitute, but as their precursor; and when he had arrived at this point, and his calculations were becoming less methodical, his mother's carriage drew up at the door.

"Oh, Charlie! are you come home? I am so glad to see you," said Mrs. Thornhill, as she stepped out of the carriage, followed by Mary Stanhope, a young lady of fifty, commonly known as Aunt Mary by the brothers, but really a first cousin of their mother.

"Come in here, Charlie, I want to talk to you; oh! never mind your cigar; Aunt Mary's used to it, and nobody will find it out in the morning."

"Was the opera good, Aunt Mary?" said Charlie, who continued to smoke.

"Very; Grisi sang as well as I ever heard her, and they have a charming bass—what's the man's name?—a German," replied Miss Stanhope, who, though an eccentricity of the first water, had a highly cultivated taste, and was fully competent to give an opinion on most things.

"Staudigl?" suggested Charlie.

"Yes; I never heard him before. What should such a dunce as you know about Staudigl?" said Aunt Mary.

"Cressingham heard him at the Grand Duchess's at Mannheim, some time ago, and said he

had the finest voice he ever heard. My friends cultivate the arts for me—it saves trouble."

"Where's Tom to-night?" said Mrs. Thornhill; "is he coming home?"

"He's dining at the Mastodons: he said he should go back to the Albany to sleep to-night, as he had to leave town on Monday."

"Do you see much of Tom, now, Charlie?" said the widow of Geoffrey Thornhill, with a sigh, as she thought of a time gone by.

"More than ever; every day."

"Where; at the Dacres?"

"Yes; not unfrequently: I generally ride with him at five; I am exercising his black hack for him; besides, we often dine together at the club."

"That Miss Dacre was at the Opera," said the widow, not to be shaken off. "What a pretty girl she is: but there's no money."

"I should think they'll marry without that; Miss Dacre is very handsome."

"I don't think it is Miss Dacre that I mean: she's handsome, with a great deal of intellect in her face, and a finer girl altogether; I mean the other one."

"That's Edith," said Charlie; "some people think her the prettier of the two."

"So she is: and Tom seems to think so among them, from what I heard to-night."

"I fancy not, mother." Here Charlie emitted such a volume of smoke that Mrs. Thornhill began to cough.

"I beg your pardon; I'm sure the smoke is too much for you." Here Charlie was making for the door, protesting that he would finish his cigar outside.

"You'd both be better in bed, if you're only going to beat about the bush in that way," said Aunt Mary.

"Well, then, Charlie, tell me, is there anything between that pretty Edith Dacre and your brother, likely to lead to an engagement? Everybody talks about it, and I'm told he's always at the house."

"Nothing whatever, my dear mother; so make your mind easy on that score."

"Easy! Ah, Charlie, if you knew my anxieties, you wouldn't be surprised at my wishing to see Tom married. And as to Edith Dacre, I could love her like a child of my own."

Heaven knows that Mrs. Thornhill could not have made use of a stronger expression. The mother of the Gracchi was not prouder of her sons, and scarcely loved them as well.

Mary Stanhope was tired of the conversation, and Charlie was not anxious to prolong it; he had quite love enough of his own on his shoulders, without interesting himself about other people.

CHAPTER XX.

IN QUEST OF A DOG.

"One that I brought up of a puppy: one that I saved from drowning, when three or four of his blind brothers and sisters went to it."—*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act IV., sc. 3.

On the Monday after this conversation, about eleven o'clock a.m., might be seen to enter Stanhope Gate a fine broad-shouldered young man, sitting on a magnificent black hack, with that charming *négligé* which bespeaks the most perfect command of the animal. His shoulders were well back and squared, his elbows close to his side, his reins held at a tolerable length one in each hand, of both curb and snaffle, giving sufficient play to the horse's mouth without any loss of control. The feet were well home in the stirrups, and the legs, easily bent at the knee, fell in a straight line from that to the instep, showing strength and power, as well as grace in every movement. His body from the hips

swayed easily with the motions of the horse, which, proud of his burden, turned from side to side, occasionally breaking from his stately walk, and exhibiting a valuable capability of bending his knee which would have been appreciated by every lover of a good mover. Very few men looked better on horseback than Charlie Thornhill; and though not strictly a handsome man, and certainly not to be compared with his brother, it was impossible to have passed him without admiration, expressed or felt.

He was little aware as he rode along, absorbed in the momentary hilarity which such consciousness of command invariably inspires, how many persons were interesting themselves for him. Sir Frederick and Lady Marston had already that very morning canvassed his chances of a commission in the cavalry, for which he was not too old, or a clerkship in the Treasury, for which he was not supposed to be eminently qualified. The days of examination had begun; and though not arrived at the pitch of absurdity to which they have since reached, they would certainly have found out Charlie's weak points. The Dacres had taken a great fancy to him, and he

had renewed his old friendship with Teddy, the boy whose life he had saved: it was not to be forgotten. At the same time, as a mother, Mrs. Dacre could not be blamed for wondering whether she had taken quite a prudent step in extending her autumn invitation to a younger son of great but doubtful expectations. She had no such misgivings about Tom; though I doubt whether she liked him the better of the two. His uncle, Henry Thornhill, had many a heart-ache over the prospects of the boy (for he was still very like one in many respects), yet he ought to have been able to assure them with tolerable certainty—at least, so said the world; and it never lies. And Lord Carlingford wondered much whether Charlie would be able to ride 12st. 7lb. in the Aristocratic, for which he had entered a very good and resolute horse, which could race as well as fence, if one could but steer him straight. There were not many gentlemen capable of the performance.

His broad shoulders were espied in the distance by an early lounger like himself; so cantering after him, as he passed through the Park gate by the Duke's, De Beauvoir joined him.

"Confound him," thought Charlie, "here's Edith Dacre's handsome admirer;" he had scarcely seen him to indulge in much conversation since the Richmond affair.

De Beauvoir, for his part, did not dream of a rival, having much too good an opinion of himself: so he touched our hero on the arm, and asked where he was going.

"To Tattersall's," said Charlie.

"So am I, to look at a cover hack for next season," said De Beauvoir.

"And I to sell; I shall ask Tattersall for stalls for the two I bought not long ago—I believe they're very good, and can carry a stone or two over my weight. I shall scarcely have time to hunt next season."

"That's not bad," said the dandy, descending from his horse and leaving him in the hands of a red-coated retainer at the Corner. "'Gad, Thornhill, that's very nearly my own case: what with putting on one's breeches, and—augh! one's boots, and—and—galloping to cover, and jogging home again, 'pon my honour it does take up a deal of time."

Lord Carlingford joined them, as Charlie

Thornhill left his horse in the hands of a man whose face he did not remember to have seen there before. He was a shrewd-looking knave, in a worn-out hunting coat, and miserably clad in[1] other respects; but he saluted Charlie with that ready assurance so indicative of the Emerald Isle, that the "noble captain" found himself with one foot on the pavement, and the fellow holding his horse with one hand, and dusting his boots with an old rag with the other, before he knew where he was. At that moment Lord Carlingford called him by name; the manner so assured a minute before suddenly changed. The obsequious hands trembled, the cunning eyes opened and fixed, and the face became pale and irresolute even to the lips.

"Mind the horse, you fool," said Charlie, "what's the matter? you'll let him go; here send somebody else, Jack; this fellow's afraid of him, I do believe." Saying which he turned with De Beauvoir and Lord Carlingford down the yard.

Half an hour sufficed to finish the business on which he went. He looked over a horse or two for Lord Carlingford, and gave a candid

opinion of the capabilities of De Beauvoir's choice of a hack, which did not please that gentleman. He soon arranged for the sale of his own two horses for the following Monday, and was returning to upper air, when he was accosted by one of Mr. Tattersall's men.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I think you lost a very valuable bull-terrier, as you set great store by, some time ago?"

"I did; a very valuable one, and did not offer a reward, as I have already paid a good deal of money in that way, only to lose her again. However, I should like to have her again, and this time I think I can take care of her."

"I don't know about that, sir; there's a gent here as as got the promise of a pointer dog for the season after next, and I know of two to have him before that time if things is on the square."

"You seem to be up in the dog business, Tom," said Charlie.

"Well, we see a good many curious characters about here; there was one here last week as none on us know'd, was askin' as if we know'd anythink about your dawg: I see the man

about this morning. They're a rum lot, they are, but I think the dog might be got at, sir."

"Was the man an Irishman?"

"Well! he didn't talk altogether like one," said Tom, whose ear was pretty well accustomed to the brogue: "but he'd got a man along with him as was a regular Irisher, I should say."

"Come to the top of the yard with me without saying anything;" and up the yard they went. Having looked stealthily down Grosvenor Place first, he then looked towards Piccadilly, and true enough the man leading the black hack proved to be the identical person in question, and in deep confabulation with him was what Tom was pleased to call "the other cove." Dismissing the helper, Charlie put his hand into his waistcoat pocket, and having rewarded his temporary servant, was about to put his foot into the stirrup, determined upon making further inquiry, when he was accosted by the tall, dark, black-whiskered confederate. After beating a little about the bush, the man freely admitted that he knew where the bull-terrier was. He also stated that it would cost money to get it

back: the least he could say would be three pounds.

"Could he guarantee it for that; and how?"

"Yes, he thought he could; but the how was the difficulty. Would the gentleman meet him that evening, and go with him to identify the dog, and pay down the money if it was all right?"

Charlie Thornhill hesitated. "Could not the dog be brought to him?"

"No, no; his pal had been done too often in that way. Would he meet him that evening at nine o'clock?"

"Where?"

"Did the gentleman know the sign of the 'Lively Fleas,' in Shoreditch?"

"Not he; he didn't know Shoreditch itself. However, there was no difficulty about that." So the black-whiskered individual, who seemed to affect something of the open and generous, and was not altogether so bad as the general run of these ruffians, gave a very lucid explanation of where the "Lively Fleas" was to be found: he only stipulated that the gentleman was to be alone, and trust to him. He would

take him where he could see his dog, and, as he believed, have him back on posting the money. With this Charlie was obliged to be content, and rode off, wondering what sort of place Shoreditch was at 9 o'clock P.M.

Having lunched with his mother and made a few calls, not forgetting the Dacres, who were about to leave town, and the Marstons, to whom he imparted his intention of giving up Melton for this winter, and going only for the first week's shooting to Gilsland instead of to Thornhills, he dined at the Club, and prepared for his evening's excursion. The arrangement of his toilet was no easy matter. No hat, coat, or general vagabondism could be found sufficient to disguise his appearance, and in utter despair he gave up the attempt. His servant was summoned, and instructed to seek a particular cabman from the top of St. James's Street. Fortunately he was to be found.

"Do you know an inn or public called the 'Lively Fleas,' in Shoreditch?"

At first the cabman seemed inclined to deny "the soft impeachment." He shook his head, rolled it from side to side, and leered at Charlie

with a very suspicious grin. At last he said, "Well, sir, I can't justly say as I don't."

"Which means that you do. Now, drive me there: and make it as soon after nine as you can."

At first the cab went reluctantly. It was loth to quit the fashionable quarter of the town; but as the streets became thinner and thinner, and the conviction forced itself upon cabby that his fare was in earnest, he quickened his pace. The City, Fleet Street, Ludgate Hill, Cheapside, all looked gloomy, and were beginning to be deserted. Shoreditch was emptied of all but miserable women and a few labouring men. Before reaching the "Lively Fleas" Charlie thought it desirable to hold converse with his old acquaintance the cabman. He was a gay, lively fellow, summer and winter in jack-boots, and always with a flower in his button-hole.

"I am going after a dog," said Charlie. "I don't know the company, and am inclined to think it's not over respectable. I must go alone with the man who meets me. You know my errand. Wait for me as near the public-house as you can. If I don't return in a reasonable time

you'll know what to do. Are there any police about here?"

"Yes, sir, there are police, if they're werry much wanted—for a missing body or so, you know; and I think I knows where to hit upon a bobby, if needs be. But they ain't noways so handy as in Belgrave Square and your parts, sir; I suppose the coves about here is so werry respectable there ain't no call for 'em. But I'm glad you told me, cos I'm blowed if there ain't some rum kens lower down. Here, sir, you take this," said the charioteer, giving him a railway whistle; "they don't like the sound o' that: and this here, too," added he, presenting Charlie with a short life-preserver; "they don't like the feel o' that. There's the 'Lively Fleas,' sir, as far as ever you can see. So if you like to get out and walk, I'll follow at a distance, and wait till I sees you agen, or don't hear nothin' of yer."

After this very intelligible arrangement Charlie proceeded on foot, and at about one hundred yards from the "Lively Fleas" he was joined by his hirsute companion. "Follow me," said the man, as he turned short to the right, nearly

falling over a child in the kennel, whom he cursed, and proceeded at a brisk pace through alleys redolent of gin, tobacco smoke, and pestilential fever. Charlie followed, mentally comparing his own chance with the stranger in a struggle for life and death, and almost thinking that he had run his head into the noose for inadequate remuneration. But he was a cool, determined fellow, and marked well every house and turning as they passed them. At length they reached a low Elizabethan house, built of wood, with overhanging windows. Here the guide stopped, and pushing open a low door, they found themselves in a passage as dark as Erebus.

END OF VOL. I.

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